MELLONEY HOLTSPUR

JOHN MASEFIELD

1st edition

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MELLONEY HOLTSPUR

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

The consecrated things are wiser than our virtue.

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PERSONS

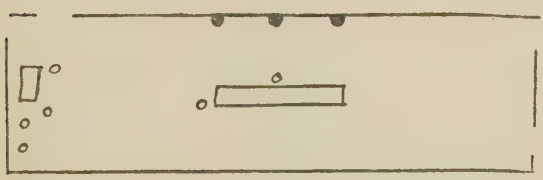
Kezia Spinfield
Bethia Parkins
The Man in Armour
Melloney Holtspur
Myrtle West
Lonny Copshrews
Jake Holtspur
Minnie Bracknell
Aline Copshrews
Lady Mento
Bunny Mento
Jemima Jones
Peter Jones
Susan Jones
Maria Jones
Lenda Copshrews
Spirits

MELLONEY HOLTSPUR

ACT I

The scene is a panelled room. At Back, a plain panelled wall with two windows R. and L. Right at back C. is a figure of a man in fifteenth century plate armour. Directly above the man in armour, let into the panelling of the wall, is the Holtspur device in a Renaissance high relief of coloured plaster: a cock holding a spur, with a motto, "In asperis spero." The windows are on each side of this figure. On the L. of the man in armour, hung on the panel, is a portrait of Melloney Holtspur. On the R. of the figure, balancing it, is a portrait of Laurence Copshrews. At extreme R. Back is a dark doorway leading off.

To Right of stage is a small table with chairs.



On the R. wing there is panelling as at Back, no

decorations. Up stage on this side is a passage leading off.

On the L. wing, panelling as at Back and R., with a fireplace and mantel in the centre of the set.

Both above and below the fireplace on this side is a passage leading off.

In the Centre of the stage is a small, oak refectory table, on which is a book bound in calf. Ink, pens and notepaper lie to right of the book.

(KEZIA SPINFIELD *and* BETHIA PARKINS *are arranging the scene.* BETHIA *is dumpy and dowdy and old.* KEZIA *is taller and smarter and older, with a frail face of some beauty.* BETHIA *enters Left with a tray and is taking it out to the passage R.*)

KEZIA.

No, not there, Bethia. Lady Mento said, " Leave it in the hall." I'll put the little table out. (*She goes off R., then returns, pulling a little wheeled table to R. of stage.*) Now put it there.

(BETHIA *puts down the tray.*)

BETHIA.

It's very late, Kezia; I declare it's nearly twelve.

KEZIA.

Just let me see if I've forgotten nothing.

BETHIA.

There's the note from the Mrs. Trenchard who is dying.

KEZIA.

Yes. Lady Mento must have that directly she

comes in. Now I will count. The soup, the biscuits, the coffee, the apple for Mr. Bunny, the salted almonds for her ladyship, the water; cups, spoons.

BETHIA.

What time will they be back from this dance, Kezia?

KEZIA.

Between two and three, I heard them say, but I daresay they'll be later. Miss Copshrews is to be there.

BETHIA.

The young lady who is coming here to-morrow?

KEZIA.

Miss Lenda Copshrews. She's stopping at Windlesham with Sir Alfred and Lady Jones, and she'll come on from there to-morrow with the four Jones children.

BETHIA.

I noticed Master Bunny was very particular about himself.

KEZIA.

He has been very particular about himself these nine weeks, ever since he met her first, at Wrocester Hunt Ball.

BETHIA.

Have you ever seen her, Kezia?

KEZIA.

Yes; often, as a baby. She was brought up at the Rectory here, by her grandfather, old Mr. Copshrews, who was the Rector here twenty-odd years ago. They left when they made him Dean of Wrocester, and I have not seen her since. That's

her photograph, grown up, on Master Bunny's desk.

BETHIA.

Twenty-odd years soon pass ; yet they make a cruel difference.

KEZIA.

You only came into the family through her ladyship's husband. You've been with the Mentos all your life. But I've been here among the Holtspurs for sixty-five years, Bethia Parkins. Twenty-odd years ago this house was a very different house from what it is now. Old Mr. Jake Holtspur, her ladyship's father, was alive then. He used to say that no man ever left this house as sober as he entered it ; and it was true, too, Bethia. Drink and paintings were the only things he cared for. But he had a grand brain, old Mr. Jake ; until her ladyship married.

My lamb, Miss Melloney, was alive then. She was his youngest, but he never cared for her.

Twenty-odd years ago, she would be singing her French song here, and old Mr. Jake drinking with his friends, and money everywhere, and my love alive.

BETHIA.

But who was this Miss Copshrews' father, Kezia ?

KEZIA.

The Rector's son, Mr. Laurence Copshrews. He was a painter.

BETHIA.

What makes you look about you like that, Kezia Spinfield ?

KEZIA.

I don't like talking of Mr. Laurence Copshrews.

He was a live blind brand of hell. And there's some of him present in this room. That portrait, there, with the green baize screen on it, is Mr. Laurence Copshrews. He painted that.

BETHIA.

I'd thought that was her ladyship's brother. He doesn't look such a villain, Kezia. He looks to me to be a handsome young man.

KEZIA.

Others thought so, more's the pity.

BETHIA.

Was this Miss Lenda Copshrews born in sin, then, Kezia ?

KEZIA.

No. He married a French singing woman. Miss Lenda was their only child. But draw the green baize, Bethia. I don't like to feel him looking at me.

BETHIA.

Why are these two pictures covered with baize, Kezia ?

KEZIA.

They are said to be very delicate pictures that must not have the sun on them. And they are very valuable. Old Mr. Jake thought the world of them. He bought several others of Mr. Copshrews' painting.

BETHIA.

(*Moving to portrait L.*) Then this is by Mr. Copshrews, too, Kezia ? And who might this be ?

KEZIA.

That is my lamb, Miss Melloney, whom he painted. I entered service here the day she was

born. The day she died was the bitterest day I've known on this earth. It is long ago now, but I cannot bear the thought of it.

BETHIA.

It is a sweet face, poor soul. Is it like her ?

KEZIA.

She was like that ; only she had a way with her ; a little merry way, that nobody could paint.

BETHIA.

And she was never married ?

KEZIA.

No. Many asked her. Sir Alfred, the father of the little Joneses who are coming, was the one I hoped. But she was not for this world.

There was another, better painting of her than this, by Mr. Copshrews, but it was burnt in the fire we had here in Mr. Holtspur's study, just after Mr. Holtspur died.

BETHIA.

I heard there was a fire.

KEZIA.

A very mysterious fire. To this day no one can understand how it broke out. And there was something about that fire which marked it as a judgment.

BETHIA.

What could it have been a judgment for ?

KEZIA.

A loving of idols, Bethia. That man's paintings were singled out by the fire, they were the only things burned, beside the mantel.

Now Heaven defend me !

BETHIA.

Whatever is it, Kezia ?

KEZIA.

Why didn't you draw the green baize curtain when I asked you ?

BETHIA.

But you can draw it, Kezia ; you're nearer to it than I. Such a fuss about a curtain !

KEZIA.

It is a fuss about a curtain, but cover his face, do you now.

BETHIA.

Why, save us, Kezia Spinfield, you look as though you'd seen a ghost. There's his face covered. A handsome young man with plenty of go in him. I never saw you in such a taking, and all about a graven image !

KEZIA.

I could tell you something about that graven image, as you call it, that would bring the sweat upon your palms for fear.

BETHIA.

And what might that be, Kezia ?

KEZIA.

If I tell you, will you promise never to breathe what I tell you to any one ?

BETHIA.

I will not tell. I promise that.

KEZIA.

I would not tell you or any one but for other things.

You know that signs come, to those about to die ?

BETHIA.

They say they do not come as they used to come. Who, here, have signs been coming to ?

KEZIA.

They have been coming to me, Bethia, in these last nights, and so I know that I'm not long for this world. First, the death-watch, but that I paid little heed to, since there are many dying, up and down ; but then, two nights ago, there was the night-cock, crowing till the rafters rang, and all a-glimmer in the air ; so then I said, " If there comes another sign, I shall know it is for me." And last night the Rider came. He came clop clep, clop clep, just at midnight, and stopped just below, in the road. I could see him there, Bethia, a rider on a white horse, with a led horse at his side. It was full moon, Bethia, and he looked at me and nodded. So I shan't see the swallows go that are now come, nor the fruit that is now blossom, but I shall be with my lovely Miss Melloney, Bethia, where blossom will never fade nor fruit fail.

BETHIA.

It's a blessed thing to be so ready, Kezia Spinfield.

KEZIA.

After ten times seven
Man is ready for heaven,
And after ten times eight
He does not want to wait.

And now I will tell you what it is that troubles me about that picture, if it be a picture.

BETHIA.

What else could it be, Kezia, my good soul ?

KEZIA.

A sending, from him in hell, to damn folk. Didn't I see it bewitch you a moment ago, just as he would have bewitched you in life? There is this about the picture, Bethia. Every night, when her ladyship has gone to bed, I creep down here with a long stick, and I push the curtain over him with the stick, so as to shut him up, so that he shan't get out.

BETHIA.

This it is to live and learn!

KEZIA.

And every morning, Bethia Parkins, when I come down, the curtain is drawn back, so that his wicked face is free.

BETHIA.

Every morning?

KEZIA.

For the last nine weeks. Ever since Master Bunny met his daughter.

BETHIA.

Kezia!

KEZIA.

It's drawn right back. He's opened his door and got out, and who knows what wickedness he's done!

BETHIA.

But he's dead, Kezia; he's dead and gone.

KEZIA.

So are a many dead and gone that work evil. I've signed that curtain with blessed water from the font, but he's stronger than the sign.

BETHIA.

Mightn't it be that new maid, Parsons, when she

dusts the room, first thing? She might draw the curtain to look at him.

KEZIA.

It's none of the maids, Bethia.

BETHIA.

It might be her ladyship or Master Bunny, Kezia. Master Bunny's taken up with painting and that. And he's up and about at all hours.

KEZIA.

It's not them. I've taken my Bible into the corner there and left the light burning and watched.

BETHIA.

What did you see, then, Kezia?

KEZIA.

At first I saw nothing and heard nothing, and I fell into a doze, in spite of myself. But I was waked by a great clang, like the trump of doom.

BETHIA.

What was it? Had something fallen?

KEZIA.

What was there to fall?

BETHIA.

A picture, perhaps, or a window blown open, or a log burned through in the hearth, or one of the fireirons falling, or a draught knocking down a vase of flowers, or a dead bough outside, falling from one of the trees.

KEZIA.

This was none of those. It was a clang like iron, and it called with a voice, and it seemed to come from Sir Tirrold Holtspur, the man in armour there.

BETHIA.

Did you hear what it said?

KEZIA.

As sure as I stand here, it cried, "Another day is dead!" And another day was dead, Bethia, for I could hear the church bells, that chime every third hour, chiming for midnight, "The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended."

BETHIA.

Kezia, I suppose Sir Tirrold Holtspur isn't in the armour? There's no man in the armour?

KEZIA.

No, indeed, it's only like his suit of clothes.

BETHIA.

I've heard of men being in the armour, and unable to rest. Who was this Sir Tirrold?

KEZIA.

The founder of the family, they say. He was in the Wars of the Roses, at the battle here. But whatever the voice was, Bethia, it was after the voice that the thing came.

BETHIA.

What thing?

KEZIA.

I don't know, but something came into the room from over there. (*Points to Right Back.*) Something unhappy.

BETHIA.

But you saw it? What did it look like?

KEZIA.

No, I didn't see it. I felt it. And it came quite

near, and it saw me and didn't mind me; it was friendly to me, though I was terrified of it.

BETHIA.

What was it, do you suppose?

KEZIA.

Lord, save us, Bethia, I believe it was he, out of the picture!

BETHIA.

The hallows be good to us!

KEZIA.

I'm sure it was, for, after a little, I felt it go over to the picture there; and as sure as I stand here, it drew back the curtain and looked at Miss Melloney. Then, after a minute, it went over to his portrait, and I saw the curtain travel back from it. The rings clinked and the baize moved.

BETHIA.

And what happened then, Kezia?

KEZIA.

I believe it went into the picture, like a spider going into his den. That was its home; there it stayed, looking out. And I was weak with terror. I backed out and away, holding my Bible against it. I've prayed for him since, Bethia, that he might find peace. But he is too strong. And he is evil to this house.

BETHIA.

You of the Holtspurs take things to heart too much. Why is he evil to this house?

KEZIA.

He brought death here.

BETHIA.

Whose death ?

KEZIA.

We'll be going to our rests, Bethia.

BETHIA.

You mean your Miss Melloney in the picture ?

KEZIA.

I mean all whom ever he touched.

BETHIA.

How did he bring death to your Miss Melloney ?

KEZIA.

How does any Judas bring death ?

(BETHIA *nods.*)

And now to-morrow his daughter will bring death to Master Bunny.

BETHIA.

No, no, Kezia. Her ladyship will save Master Bunny, if it be a case of saving.

KEZIA.

She'll snare mother and son as he snared father and daughter. He brought death in his touch and so will she.

BETHIA.

She was all in all to you, your Miss Melloney ?

(KEZIA *nods.*)

And she died, of a kiss.

KEZIA.

No matter how she died.

BETHIA.

When it is all summed, when we come to our

ends, we women, we had rather have that than the nothing some of us have.

KEZIA.

Maybe, woman. I had a love once, withered as I am. He could not marry me. He had to tend his old mother, and died before her.

BETHIA.

I never had that. I'd nothing.

KEZIA.

Nothing ?

BETHIA.

There was one I used to watch for, riding by ; but he never knew. He was killed in the Egypt war. I could have died, of a kiss.

KEZIA.

At this moment, at the dance, Master Bunny would die for one. May them of this house guard their own, from the evil here and evil coming. Amen. Give me your arm, woman. Since my Miss Melloney died it's been an uphill road with me ; but there's rest from it all at the end.

(They go out Left.)

(After a minute's delay, a clock, off, to the Right, strikes Twelve, and chimes. The figure of SIR TIRROLD HOLTSPUR *cries : Another day is dead !)*

The room is quite dark, except for the moonlight that comes in from the windows over the portraits. As these have scutcheons in them, the light on the floor has colour in it.

(*The ghost of* MELLONEY *is seen moving silently on to the stage from the door down stage L. She is in white, and is crying silently. She moves gropingly to the centre of the stage.*)

MELLONEY HOLTSPUR.

I am Melloney Holtspur, the last of old Jake Holtspur's daughters. I cannot rest. (*She comes down.*) I died, in the room above this, eighteen years ago. There were three of us girls: Hester, and Julia, and I. Hester married. Julia married. I did not marry any one. Julia Mento has this old house now; she with her boy, Bunny, whom I love.

Twenty-two years ago at Easter time! Twenty-two years ago, two hundred and sixty-four months, eleven hundred and forty-four weeks, what a lot of days, what a lot of nights, unable to rest!

(*Calls.*) Lonny! Lonny!—No. He never comes. Lonny! Lonny Copshrews! Lonny Copshrews!

He was not the man I wished to marry; that was long ago, when I was a girl. Lonny Copshrews was the man I loved. One can only love once, they say; it is true. No one could love twice, like this. Love is strong as death, we used to say. It is a great deal stronger.

Lonny Copshrews painted me. (*She looks at the portrait L.*) Such an one I was, this past. He has caught the look to the life. He was a marvellous artist, but a very wicked man. But, wicked or not, I love him. (*She leaves the portrait and goes to the Centre near the man in armour.*) One, two, three,

four. Four years between that day and my death. But really I died that day. (*She calls again.*) I am so unhappy; so unhappy!

One, two three, four. Eighteen years since my death, and four years before that, twenty-two years.

All the Holtspurs who ever were are in this house. They can help me. Won't you help me? Sir Tirrold Holtspur, you who founded the family, and were so brave, you can comfort me. (*She turns to the man in armour.*)

(*She comes groping right down the stage.*) There are no Holtspurs now. Only Julia's boy, Bunny, Watching Julia and Bunny is my only joy. And little Susan Jones, who is coming here to-morrow, I love her. (*She goes up stage to look at portrait R.*) Lonny! Lonny Copshrews! Why were you so cruel to me? Oh, you beautiful thing! That is exactly you. Just as you were twenty-two years ago, in this room, at this time of the year. This is what happened in this room, at this time of the year, twenty-two years ago.

The scene changes to daylight, so that all the room can be clearly seen.

(Enter MYRTLE WEST *with* LAURENCE COPSHREWS, *Right Back.* LAURENCE COPSHREWS *carries a package of about* 24 *inches by* 15 *inches in his left hand. He is* 29.)

MYRTLE.

Miss Holtspur. O, sir, she is not here after all. She must be upstairs. I'll go to look for her.

LONNY.

Thanks.

MYRTLE.

What name shall I say, sir ?

LONNY.

Copshrews. Laurence Copshrews.

MYRTLE.

O, yes, sir.

LONNY.

Not the Rector, but from Paris, say.

MYRTLE.

Very good, sir. (*Exit* MYRTLE *Left Back.*)

LONNY.

A jolly pretty girl, that.

(MELLONEY *enters Left Back almost at once. She is* 25.)

MELLONEY.

(*Shaking hands.*) Why, Lonny, welcome back from Paris. You're very unexpected, aren't you ?

LONNY.

I'm not often expected at my home, even if I say I'm coming.

MELLONEY.

Still, here you are. How is Paris ?

LONNY.

It's all right, for those that like that kind of thing.

MELLONEY.

Your father will be a glad man. It must be two years since you were here.

LONNY.

It isn't. It's fifteen months and odd days.

MELLONEY.

You're very exact about it.

LONNY.

I've reason to be exact. It was the last time I saw you.

MELLONEY.

It has seemed like two years to your father.

LONNY.

So he said. I don't like my father.

MELLONEY.

I know. I cannot think why.

LONNY.

He has been the thing I've had to fight since I was five.

MELLONEY.

Now that you have beaten him, you can be generous.

LONNY.

I don't know that I have beaten him.

MELLONEY.

You've made your own way. You're famous.

LONNY.

I'm notorious. That doesn't prove him wrong about me. Why did he put me into that insurance office when I was only fifteen ?

MELLONEY.

He wanted to be sure that you had a calling to be a painter.

LONNY.

In the divine arts everybody is called, but people like my father intervene. And he had had fair warning not to interfere with me. He tried the same game on my brother Bill, and Bill ran away to sea. He was drowned somewhere off Sydney Heads on the day I was born. I wish Bill had lived. I can't tell you how much I wish that Bill had lived.

MELLONEY.

You mean that you would have loved to have had a brother?

LONNY.

I? No, I'd have knocked his head off, or he mine. No, for a very different reason.

MELLONEY.

What? May I know?

LONNY.

I'll tell you some day. I suppose my father is loved?

MELLONEY.

Very much.

LONNY.

People go to him in trouble and that kind of thing?

MELLONEY.

They do.

LONNY.

When he dies, they'll all turn out, to carry him to his grave?

MELLONEY.

I hope that that will not be for many years to come.

LONNY.

But they will?

MELLONEY.

Yes, Lonny; all the village.

LONNY.

That is the test, I suppose; what they think of you while you are still new to your coffin. They'd weep and they'd bring wreaths.

MELLONEY.

Would not you, Lonny?

LONNY.

Weep, and lay flowers for my father? No, by God! (*He moves rapidly over to Right and lights a cigarette.*)

MELLONEY.

Lonny! (*No answer.*) Lonny! (*No answer.*) I won't have you here, Lonny, if you swear.

LONNY.

All right; turn me out. Do.

MELLONEY.

I don't want to turn you out. I want you not to speak like that.

LONNY.

I'll speak my mind.

MELLONEY.

Do. You have a beautiful mind. But that was not your mind; that was your devil.

LONNY.

You ought to be sorry for a devil. He is in hell.

MELLONEY.

What do you mean by that?

LONNY.

In hell? In the depths of himself. But I'd

rather be in hell than safe in the fold with a sheep like my father.

MELLONEY.

Lonny, I won't hear your father abused. He is a good priest and a devoted, unselfish man.

LONNY.

You prefer him to your own father, don't you?

MELLONEY.

Lonny, that's not fair.

LONNY.

Miss Melloney Holtspur doesn't get on with her father. I can't think why.

MELLONEY.

I should have thought you could have guessed why.

LONNY.

Perhaps I have guessed. You're very like your mother, and you are still on your mother's side, against your father, who was a beast to her. But I do get on with your father; I like him. He's real. Not many ruined squires could have built up this big cement works. Besides, he was the first man here to see what I am, and he buys my pictures. He doesn't pay me enough for them.

MELLONEY.

Who could?

LONNY.

He could. And then, Melloney, he's your father, and I find him damned useful as a dictionary.

MELLONEY.

What do you mean?

LONNY.

You're a very interesting book to me, Miss Melloney Holtspur.

MELLONEY.

And do you think you can read me ?

LONNY.

I don't want to read you. I want to get you by heart. But I come upon all sorts of words that I don't understand, and then I look them up in the dictionary.

MELLONEY.

Do you find them in your dictionary ?

LONNY.

Sometimes. But sometimes I only find them in the dark night when I can't sleep, when I go up and down in my mind, and trace out what you are. This life is a mysterious game, and we only play half our game ourselves.

MELLONEY.

Surely we live our own lives, Lonny !

LONNY.

I'm not so sure. But I'm sure it would have been a very miserable game for me, but for you. By God, when my father beat me and I wanted to kill him or myself, you were the only bright thing left. By God, you were an angel to me. However, you look out. Those who are angels to me get chastened. Save a rogue from the gallows and he'll cut your throat. Now I've warned you.

MELLONEY.

I've already been warned, thank you, Lonny.

LONNY.

Oh ? Come on out, then, and have a set of tennis.

MELLONEY.

We can't. The court's not marked.

LONNY.

Is your dog Sam alive still ?

MELLONEY.

Very much alive.

LONNY.

Well, you go and get Sam and I'll go and get my gun, and we'll have a bit of ratting round the granary. Your father wouldn't mind.

MELLONEY.

We can't, Lonny. Julia's here with her baby boy, and you'd wake him.

LONNY.

I didn't know Julia had a baby. What's his name ?

MELLONEY.

We call him Bunny. He's nine months old.

LONNY.

I'm glad Julia's got a baby. I'm very fond of your sister Julia, and I pity her. Mento's made a pot of money over those breakwaters he builds, but he drinks like a fish, and he doesn't buy my pictures. I wanted to paint Julia, and she'd have been willing, but he beat down my price till I could only do a drawing.

MELLONEY.

Did you do a drawing ? I don't remember one.

LONNY.

No. I told him to clear out and get a tin-type

taken. Chaps like Mento want a lesson now and then that genius is cheap at any price. Mento! He dropped ten thousand tons of concrete into the sea and they knighted him because it sank! I could have made him immortal by painting Julia; fairly immortal, that is; immortal enough for him.

MELLONEY.

You might paint her now for me, Lonny, if you'd take the commission.

LONNY.

Well, I won't take the commission, not from you. Besides, I shan't be here. I'm going.

MELLONEY.

Going? After just coming! Back to Paris?

LONNY.

No fear! I've done with Paris.

MELLONEY.

Where, then?

LONNY.

Some place.

MELLONEY.

Are you in any trouble, Lonny?

LONNY.

Trouble? Yes, I'm a devil, outside the pale.

MELLONEY.

Could I help in any way?

LONNY.

Yes.

MELLONEY.

How?

LONNY.

You could shoot me dead.

MELLONEY.

Lonny, never speak like that, no matter what trouble you are in. Come and tell me the trouble. Are you in want of money, or worried about your work, or in a mess with some one, or what is it ?

LONNY.

It's all of those things.

MELLONEY.

Then sit down here and we'll get it all straight, just as we used in the old days. First, you're in want of money. How much money ?

LONNY.

You can go to blazes !

MELLONEY.

I don't like blazes, Lonny. I like keeping cool. How much did you say ?

LONNY.

Both hands in the till.

MELLONEY.

Fifty pounds ?

LONNY.

I'm not good at sums.

MELLONEY.

I'll give you fifty pounds for a pastel of Julia, or for two charcoal drawings, one of Julia, one of Bunny. I'll write you a cheque now.

LONNY.

You will just kindly go to hell. Damn it ! I wish I didn't swear so.

MELLONEY.

I wish you didn't, Lonny.

LONNY.

But you go a bit too far with me, offering me money like a damned picture-dealer. You aren't going to give me money. You're on the free list with me. What I am is yours, all that's holy of me.

MELLONEY.

I'm sorry I mentioned money, Lonny. We will pass to the next matter. Now, " damns have had their day," remember. One more damn or hell, and I ring for Kezia to show you out. Now be your nice self and say you're sorry.

LONNY.

You shouldn't have insulted me with your charity.

MELLONEY.

I won't have my æsthetic sense called names. Now, why are you worried about your work ?

LONNY.

Because I've gone outside the pale, and become a devil. D'you think I care for this green earth ? I don't. I've put to sea from it, and my art's my boat, and the sea's rough and my boat's leaky. Worried about my work ? I've given my soul for it, and, after all, it isn't good, it isn't good.

MELLONEY.

It is good, Lonny.

LONNY.

It isn't good enough.

MELLONEY.

What have you been painting ? You haven't been exhibiting.

LONNY.

Do you follow my work ?

MELLONEY.

Of course I do.

LONNY.

Women don't like art; it's their only rival. They don't care for art; they've too much sense. They want their loves to be returned, so they love the artists, not what the artists love. What is art to you? What do you suppose it is to me? There's nobody, nobody on this green earth I wouldn't sacrifice. There's nobody I haven't sacrificed. And all just to draw a line. There. There is a line. It isn't the line of a master.

MELLONEY.

It's the line of one who will be a master. No one has been a master at your age.

LONNY.

You lie, to make me happy with failure.

MELLONEY.

I speak the truth so that you may not believe the cowardly lie you are telling yourself. You know that you are a great painter. How dare you deny the holy spirit in yourself?

LONNY.

How can a holy spirit touch a creature like me?

MELLONEY.

Because you've got to interpret it to men.

LONNY.

Why doesn't it touch me, then?

MELLONEY.

It does.

LONNY.

It did. Now there is a blank; there is blackness,

deadness, dryness. I've sacrificed everything for emptiness.

MELLONEY.

What mess have you been getting into, Lonny? Is it one that you can tell me about?

LONNY.

This world is the mess. I ought not to have been born. It's my brother Bill's fault in a way. If he'd been placid and an ass, like my father, he would have stayed at home and been a comfort, as they call it. He would have done. I wouldn't have been wanted. I wouldn't have been born. All they gat me for was to be a consolation to my mother, who died when I was one. But for Bill they might have left me alone. I'd have been in the night of nothing. And all this suffering wouldn't have been.

MELLONEY.

What suffering?

LONNY.

The suffering I bring wherever I go.

(*Enter* KEZIA SPINFIELD, *Left Back. She sees* LONNY *and is visibly discomposed, but advances down stage.*)

MELLONEY.

Yes, Kezia?

KEZIA.

It is Minnie Bracknell, Miss Melloney, come over from Nap Hill from Mrs. Holyport.

MELLONEY.

Oh, yes, I had forgotten! Excuse me, Lonny. I'll go to her, Kezia. (*Exit, Left Back.*)

LONNY.

Good-morning, Miss Spinfield.

(KEZIA *gulps. They eye each other.*)

Did you speak ?

KEZIA.

No, Mr. Copshrews.

LONNY.

My mistake.

(*They eye each other.*)

KEZIA.

Mr. Copshrews——

LONNY.

Yes ?

KEZIA.

You had best go out of this house, sir.

LONNY.

Why ?

KEZIA.

Then you won't bring suffering where it isn't deserved.

LONNY.

I don't know what you are talking about.

KEZIA.

You understand me well enough, Master Laurence. You can lose me my bread by complaining. You've no business to be here, sir.

LONNY.

What do you mean by no business ? You mind your own business, in your own kitchen, with your own broom. Lord, you take something on yourself !

KEZIA.

I do, Master Laurence, I take a great deal on myself.

LONNY.

Well, spare yourself the trouble, where I'm concerned.

KEZIA.

I would I could, Mr. Copshrews. You're not a fit associate for those who live here.

LONNY.

Are you ?

KEZIA.

I am a servant here, Mr. Laurence. I try to do my duty.

LONNY.

Try to know your place.

KEZIA.

It does not become you to remind me of my place, Mr. Copshrews. What one does in the place gives the station. You are presuming too much in coming to Miss Holtspur. There's a woman now at this door, Mr. Copshrews.

LONNY.

What woman is that ?

KEZIA.

Minnie Bracknell, that you painted when you were here last, that you made the talk of Nap Hill.

LONNY.

The dirty mind, and the dirty tongue, and the dirty soul of Nap Hill make the talk of Nap Hill, and the blackbeetle soul of the brick Bethel makes you. Now you clear right out of here, Kezia Spinfield, or, old as you are, I'll set devils on you. I am drawing you now, and making your graven image, and if ever you presume to speak to me again like this, I'll burn you in a slow fire and make you

dwindle away. Do you know what you ought to do?

KEZIA.

My duty to those I love, Mr. Copshrews.

LONNY.

No. Your duty to those you hate. Paint your cheeks and gather roses, and run naked through the streets, and take your fill of love until the even. Then you may know more of the sinners for whom Christ died. You vinegar in the salad of your neighbour's sin, get out!

KEZIA.

I am going, Mr. Copshrews. It is no very great credit to a gentleman to miscall a servant. But I've seen you what you are and told you; no fit company in this house. Pride will be known, Master Copshrews, and sin punished.

LONNY.

O, la, la!

(*Exit* KEZIA, *Left.*)

LONNY.

I wonder how much that old devil really knows? However, now that the coast is clear, I'll return my borrowings. Is the coast clear?

(*He takes a package from his pocket, goes rapidly to Back of stage near man in armour, moves a catch, opens a panel, puts the package inside the panel and closes it. As he comes down stage, old* JAKE HOLTSPUR *enters, Right Back.*)

Good lord! here's her father. How d'ye do, Mr. Holtspur?

JAKE.

Ah, Copshrews! Going strong? You look very guilty about something. Been pinching the plate?

LONNY.

You gave me rather a start, sir. You're looking well, sir. Have you been finding any more Gainsboroughs ?

JAKE.

Not I, by the Lord Harry ! There are too many looking for them. Have you been painting any more romantics ?

LONNY.

I've one I'd like you to see.

JAKE.

You're at the Rectory ? I'll come over to see it. Not to-day, though. I'm going now to town to see my doctor. He's cutting down my alcohol, and at my age it's bad to alter habits. Have they given you a drink or anything ? Will you have a glass of port or something ?

LONNY.

No, thanks, Mr. Holtspur, I may be painting this afternoon.

JAKE.

I've got some very nice port still, for I don't drink it much myself. It's too sugary for my complaint. When I was young, my father told me to keep it for my old age. Now in my old age, by gad, I daren't drink it !

LONNY.

A case of " If youth but knew ! "

JAKE.

Gladiator port, too ; worth a guinea a pint. A very pretty tipple, Mr. Copshrews. But I don't like this abstinence of yours. You can't paint if you

don't drink. Have a Kummel, that can't do you any harm.

LONNY.

No, nothing, thank you, Mr. Holtspur.

JAKE.

You make me seem very inhospitable. Let me see, have I done anything in your line ? I bought the Colway Millet since I saw you, Les Vanneurs. Are you still schwärming for Millet ? He used to be rather a pet of yours, didn't he ?

LONNY.

He was one of my toys when I was a child. I've sucked the paint off now and he's lost his taste.

JAKE.

Who is the present man ?

LONNY.

Whom I admire ? Myself. A jolly good painter, Mr. Holtspur.

JAKE.

Well, there's nothing like faith, is there ? There was something I wanted to ask you about. Could you look at some pictures for me, on the old terms ?

LONNY.

My prices have doubled.

JAKE.

Well, that was only to be looked for. Come and have a gin cocktail and talk it over. At least, have the cocktail ; we must have the talk later. I've got to start. I'll come over to-morrow to see your picture. You must try to overcome this drought of yours. I don't like it. There's drought enough in the other world, by all accounts. (*He goes out, Left Back.*) Con Dios!

(*Enter* MELLONEY *at Back Right leading* MINNIE BRACKNELL.)

MELLONEY.

Just wait for one moment, Minnie, I'll write a note.

(*Sits to write at table.* MINNIE *stands R.*)

LONNY.

Why, Minnie, how are you ?

MINNIE.

Nicely, thank you, sir.

LONNY.

And how is little Bobby ?

MINNIE.

He's gone away, now, sir, back to his mother's.

LONNY.

What times those were on the ice that Christmas with Bobby and the sledge ! You're looking very well.

MINNIE.

Thank you, sir. Are you keeping on with your painting, sir ?

LONNY.

Yes. I still keep on with it.

MELLONEY.

This is your note for Mrs. Holyport, Minnie ; and the linen will go over by the carrier.

MINNIE.

Thank you, miss. Good morning, miss. (*Exit R.*) Good morning, sir.

MELLONEY.

Good morning. I forgot that you knew Minnie. Let me see. You painted her, did you not ?

LONNY.

Rémy and I both drew her a year ago, when Rémy was here with me.

MELLONEY.

Did you think her pretty ?

LONNY.

Yes, fruit is pretty ; that's why it gets eaten.

MELLONEY.

Even forbidden fruit ?

LONNY.

That's eaten first : see Genesis.

MELLONEY.

Did you taste this fruit ?

LONNY.

No, but I was a damned fool not to, if that's the kind of thing you think.

MELLONEY.

I do not like your Monsieur Rémy.

LONNY.

He is a good friend and quite a good painter.

MELLONEY.

A man may be all that and yet a very bad influence.

LONNY.

Well, he's coming to live here next year, so you can reform him. Who's the new maid you've got ?

MELLONEY.

The maid who let you in ? Myrtle West.

LONNY.

She's pretty.

MELLONEY.

You'd better paint her.

LONNY.

I was thinking so.

MELLONEY.

What did you do to Kezia while I was out of the room ?

LONNY.

I've an old feud with that old hag.

MELLONEY.

She's a dear soul, Lonny, and she's shaking like a leaf.

LONNY.

She shouldn't believe evil, then.

MELLONEY.

What have you done to make her believe evil ?

LONNY.

I've got to be myself, I suppose. Once, when I was a boy, she caught me trying to raise the Devil.

MELLONEY.

You ?

LONNY.

I had to have some antidote to my father.

MELLONEY.

You might have stopped short of the Devil, I should have thought.

LONNY.

I did. He didn't come. I wasn't worth it. But I believe in the Devil. He was the first artist to quarrel with the Royal Academy.

MELLONEY.

Now, Lonny, that is enough. I will not permit it.

You must please go. You've been very rude to me. You have upset a poor old woman, and you make these offensive and blasphemous attempts at jokes.

LONNY.

So you turn me out.

MELLONEY.

Yes, I do, unless you will apologise.

LONNY.

Well, I won't apologise. Remember, if I go now, you'll not see me within these doors again.

MELLONEY.

Very well, Lonny.

LONNY.

Very well, then. I hope you'll have a happy life with your Kezia. They'll make you elder at the Bethel if you keep on. Or even a prophet at the Ebenezer. Good-bye. (*Turns Right.*)

MELLONEY.

Good-bye, Lonny.

LONNY.

And I'll paint Myrtle West *and* Minnie Bracknell.

MELLONEY.

Paint whom you like, Lonny.

LONNY.

I shall. (*Exit, Right.*)

MELLONEY.

Lonny?

LONNY.

What?

MELLONEY.

Aren't you forgetting something?

LONNY.

(*Turning.*) To shake hands ? No.

MELLONEY.

No. I meant this parcel.

LONNY.

Damn the parcel !

MELLONEY.

It is yours, isn't it ?

LONNY.

(*Turns and flings parcel into fireplace.*) There, to hell with it !

MELLONEY.

You missed hell by two feet.

LONNY.

(*Takes the Holtspur Book and flings it on the floor.*) There ! (*He turns, stamping and raging to the Right.*)

MELLONEY.

Oh, Lonny, Lonny, Lonny ! Come.

LONNY.

Come where ? You shouldn't madden me. It's all your fault. You know the kind of beast I am. (*He comes down Centre to face her and flings himself on his knees.*) I've been a wild beast. Here's my knife. Cut my heart out, or I'll cut off my fingers one by one. I will. I swear I will ! Well, if you think I'm joking, here's the first.

MELLONEY.

Lonny, give me that knife ; give it here. How dare you be so weak !

LONNY.

I've been a beast to you, Melloney, and I'm going

to do penance. Well, I'll put my hands in the fire. (*Runs at fire. She stops him.*)

MELLONEY.

No, no, Lonny, dear. I don't want you to do penance. But pick up your drawings; they are drawings?

(*He does so.*)

And now pick up our book. It is the Holtspur Book; manuscript from three centuries.

(*He picks it up and dusts it.*)

David Mento thinks that a poem in the manuscript alludes to a hidden treasure here.

LONNY.

Oh?

MELLONEY.

There's the poem. David thinks there may be a sliding panel connected with the man in armour.

LONNY.

Did he find one?

MELLONEY.

No.

LONNY.

Well, if the Scotchman didn't find the treasure, the Englishman need not look.

MELLONEY.

I thought you would be thrilled at the thought of a secret hoard.

LONNY.

I'm not thrilled by anything except the sense of your goodness to me. Why are you always like God Almighty to me?

(*He takes her hand. She pats his hand and puts it from her.*)

MELLONEY.

We're friends. I want you to show me your drawings.

LONNY.

There are the drawings, then. (*He moves away Right.*)

MELLONEY.

But these are finished pictures!

LONNY.

There are drawings underneath.

MELLONEY.

But these are splendid!

LONNY.

They're the best things I've done. That one's Yseult. Do you mind my painting you for Yseult?

MELLONEY.

I'm much touched, Lonny.

LONNY.

The other's Guinevere. You'll be vexed at my painting you for Guinevere.

MELLONEY.

I am very proud, Lonny.

LONNY.

Yseult—Guinevere. Both took up with the fool. Yseult married a fool like me. Guinevere married a fool like my father. A wicked fool and a formal fool, whose touch was death. You be warned from the fool. I've warned you now, fairly. They were beautiful women, who could have married anybody; but only the fool wanted them, to that point.

MELLONEY.

The best men in the world gave their lives for them.

LONNY.

Ah ! devotion, when it is too late ; the best men are full of that. But the fools saw what they were. Folly goes with vision ; folly and death.

Melloney, you do not know what you have been to me for all these years.

MELLONEY.

I know what you are to me.

LONNY.

Pah ! what is that ? If I were to die, it would not matter to you, but if you were to die, it would kill me.

MELLONEY.

Perhaps if you were to die my life might not seem worth while.

LONNY.

What difference could my death make to you ?

MELLONEY.

I think it would make all the difference.

LONNY.

Melloney, answer me one thing. Three nights ago I could stand it no longer ; I was in Paris ; I called you and you answered. Was that you ?

(MELLONEY *nods.*)

LONNY.

You held out your hands to me, like that, and I took them, and it was all like a transfiguration.

(MELLONEY *nods.*)

LONNY.

Over all those miles—my God ! that was your real answer to me ?

MELLONEY.

I knew you wanted me, so I stood at my window and turned to you, and I know I reached you, and I was proud.

LONNY.

And happy ?

MELLONEY.

Very happy. Intensely happy, for a time.

LONNY.

Only for a time ?

MELLONEY.

Yes. Afterwards I had a terrible dream about you.

LONNY.

What did you dream ?

MELLONEY.

I cannot bear to think of it ; it was so unlike you. You struck me over the face, a blow that made me reel.

LONNY.

But that was only a dream, Melloney. Dreams go by contraries.

MELLONEY.

This was no ordinary dream.

LONNY.

Nor was the other, when we met and held hands ; that was the heart of life ; our two souls understood each other.

MELLONEY.

Yes. That was the heart of life, Lonny !

LONNY.

Melloney, beloved !

MELLONEY.

Oh, Lonny, you mustn't call me that !

LONNY.

Why not ? It is what you are.

MELLONEY.

No, no, Lonny.

LONNY.

Don't you like being called that ?

MELLONEY.

Yes, dear, it was very sweet. But you called me that in the dream.

LONNY.

My heart's darling, then, that I love and worship. Is that better ?

MELLONEY.

It could not be better.

LONNY.

Melloney, all these years I've longed to take your head in my hands, as I do now. It is like holding the Host, my God. I've painted this head and worshipped this head with all I am and can be.

MELLONEY.

Oh, Lonny, darling !

LONNY.

No, I'm not fit to kiss you, Melloney. I've been all down in the slough. I'm all rayed red with it. (*Pause.*) Your life is running into me like spring in a beechwood.

MELLONEY.

(*Kissing his hand.*) Lonny, my lover, you'll not strike me with this hand, will you ?

LONNY.

Oh, Melloney! you mustn't do that. I'm not worthy.

MELLONEY.

Promise you never will.

LONNY.

Of course I never will.

MELLONEY.

Because it would kill me if you did.

LONNY.

Melloney, darling, put the nightmare away. Your eyes are all haunted with it. Your eyes are black and burning. Shut your eyes. (*He kisses her.*)

MELLONEY.

Oh, Lonny! Oh, Lonny!

LONNY.

My God, I'll always bless the apple blossom, because it brought me you!

MELLONEY.

Life has not much to offer us after that.

LONNY.

Whatever the past was, or the future may be, we'll have had that. And this. (*He kisses her again.*)

(*Enter* KEZIA SPINFIELD *at Right Back. She sees them and is aghast.*)

KEZIA.

Miss Melloney! (*She advances down stage and the lovers break.*) Miss Melloney!

MELLONEY.

Yes, Kezia, what is it?

KEZIA.

There's somebody called, Miss Melloney.

MELLONEY.

Who is it, do you know ?

KEZIA.

It's a lady, Miss Melloney, to speak to Mr. Copshrews.

LONNY.

What lady ?

(*Enter* MADAME ALINE.)

MME. ALINE.

This lady. Your wife.

LONNY.

So you followed me !

MME. ALINE.

You did not think to give me the slip ? This, mademoiselle, is my husband, the father of my daughter, Mees Lenda Copshrews, aged three months, now at your Rectoree.

MELLONEY.

I did not know, madam, that your husband was a married man.

MME. ALINE.

We have been married fifteen months.

MELLONEY.

And you have a little daughter. You will excuse me. (*Going Left.*) I hope the little daughter may grow up to every beauty and every happiness. Kezia, will you come with me ? (*She bows. They go off, Back Left.*)

MME. ALINE.

Well, Laurence ?

LONNY.

You've put yourself in the cart, I hope you know.

MME. ALINE.

Comment?

LONNY.

You've done for yourself. You followed me and then came here. By George, that's the very last!

MME. ALINE.

Won't you come back with me and start again?

LONNY.

No, I won't. Is that plain enough? *Je m'en fiche.* I've done with you. I thought you knew that a year ago. But after this——Anyhow, we've no place here. Get out!

MME. ALINE.

Will you get out? Will I see you? There is to discuss.

LONNY.

You will see me, sure enough. There is to discuss; you're right. Now go.

(ALINE *goes, Back R.* LONNY *comes to table, Centre.*)

LONNY.

No more need of these things! (*He wraps the drawings carelessly and flings them into the hiding-place. Then picks up the drawing of* KEZIA.) That's the last drawing I shall do. I'll sign and date it. My last; then the date. What the devil is the date? Signed L.C. There. *Puts it in the hiding-place which he closes.*) I am a rotten blackguard! Now then, toss up. Heads, I go to the Isles of Greece. Tails, I join the Foreign Legion. (*Tosses.*) Heads, the Isles of Greece! Threes.

(*Tosses again.*) Tails, the Foreign Legion. One all. (*Tosses again.*) Heads, the Isles of Greece! So be it. (*He goes swiftly out, Back Right*).

The Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece,
When burning Sappho loved and sung.

(*The light changes to darkness and moonlight as before, and the stage is empty. After some seconds the* MAN IN ARMOUR *says :*)

SIR TIRROLD.

Another hour.

(*The ghost of* MELLONEY HOLTSPUR *enters as before from Front Left.*)

MELLONEY.

That is what happened in this room twenty-two years ago at this time of the year. I cannot get away from it. Lonny! Lonny Copshrews! No. He has never been here since. (*She comes right down to Centre Front.*) I think that a strange thing is going to happen here, for there are colours and sounds. And Bunny is troubled. It can only mean more unhappiness; for only the sad thing happens here. There is a noise of wheels, too; the living must be coming back. It is my sister Julia, with Bunny. (*She draws back Front Left, then off.*)

(BUNNY'S *voice is heard off saying :*)

BUNNY.

Kezia has left the things here, mother!

(*Enter* LADY MENTO.)

BUNNY.

Just wait till I switch on the lights. (*He turns on all the lights.*)

LADY M.

Only this one light, Bunny; my eyes are tired.

BUNNY.

Right-ho! (*He switches all off except a green-shaded one, Right.*) Now sit you down. Hullo! here's a note for you, marked "Urgent."

(LADY M. *sits in chair, Right.*)

Will you have soup or coffee, mother? Oh, dash! I'm making a filthy mess of this.

LADY M.

Soup, please.

BUNNY.

This seems to be soup, and here's a biscuit. I'm going to have coffee. (*He pulls up a chair beside his mother, to left of her and slightly below her.*) Anything serious in the note, mother?

LADY M.

Yes. Mrs. Trenchard is very much worse. She wants to speak to me before she dies. I wonder why. I must go down before breakfast. They've been good tenants, the Trenchards. Minnie Trenchard—she used to be so pretty. I'll leave word that I'm to be called at six. I must be back early, for the Jones children will be here at ten, and Miss Copshrews at eleven. (*Goes R., then returns.*) And how does the dance seem, in memory, Bunny?

BUNNY.

It was a clinking dance.

LADY M.

Is Miss Copshrews a . . . clinking partner?

BUNNY.

She is. Mother, you knew Miss Copshrews' father, the painter. What was he like, exactly?

LADY M.

That portrait.

(BUNNY *examines the portrait.*)

BUNNY.

Mother, you know, these two portraits are amazing. I agree with Edward Boveney; Laurence Copshrews was "as great a painter as any we have had."

LADY M.

He shocked me, I must say.

BUNNY.

Madame Copshrews, his widow, married again last week.

LADY M.

I saw that.

BUNNY.

Do you know why she left him?

LADY M.

I should say that the main cause was Laurence Copshrews, day in, day out, for the year or so they were married.

BUNNY.

I think he was ill, mother. He died within four years of the parting.

LADY M.

The Laurence Copshrews of this world, Bunny, don't stand the strain of any real relationship, friendship, or partnership or marriage. Under their intellect there is nothing that you can trust. (*She rises and comes to table, Centre.*)

BUNNY.

You don't mind Miss Copshrews coming, mother?

LADY M.

She seems a nice young woman. I shall be glad to know her better. I did not like her parents.

BUNNY.

I am very glad that she is coming, mother.

LADY M.

Yes. Bunny. I want you always to be glad, Bunny.

BUNNY.

Thank you, mother. Mother, I saw Edward Boveney there this evening for a minute. He said that Laurence Copshrews' best works were small paintings of the Arthur story, which he had seen, but which have absolutely disappeared. I wondered if they could possibly be here, stored away somewhere.

LADY M.

Your father went through everything when your grandfather died. He found no paintings except these and those that were burned. There were some unimportant letters from Laurence Copshrews. Your father burned them.

BUNNY.

I wish that they had not been burned. Too much has been burned. I would like this house to have all its records that Laurence Copshrews came here.

LADY M.

Does not Miss Copshrews know about the paintings?

BUNNY.

No.

LADY M.

The Frenchwoman may have them.

BUNNY.

Edward Boveney says not.

LADY M.

Lonny left them in Greece, then.

BUNNY.

I hoped that they might be here somewhere.

LADY M.

They're not.

BUNNY.

This is a strange house, mother. A lot of Holtspurs have lived and died in it. It must be full of us. I sometimes wonder if they don't take a part in our lives.

LADY M.

We know that they do not, Bunny.

BUNNY.

I know, mother. But you are used to this house. I'm only just beginning to realise it. It holds all the secrets of all the Holtspurs for four hundred and fifty years. I wonder if there are any secret rooms!

LADY M.

You'll find nothing romantic here, Bunny. Some of the romance went when water was laid on, and more when electric light was installed, but the last went when we put in central heating. The ghosts are all laid and the skeletons are all buried.

BUNNY.

But there is romance, mother. And the most romantic painter of modern times was here, and to-morrow his daughter will be here.

LADY M.

I wonder, will she find romance here, Bunny!

BUNNY.

I wonder that, too, mother.

LADY M.

Good-night, my dear boy. Will you switch on the stair lights, and then put out ?

BUNNY.

Yes, mother. Good-night.

LADY M.

(*Moving off Right.*) Good-night.

BUNNY.

(*Alone.*) Lenda—Lenda Copshrews. . . . This place seems full of the Holtspurs. . . . Who is that there ?

(MELLONEY *enters noiselessly from Left to the back of stage.*)

Midnight fancies ! (*He switches off the last light.*) It's time for bed. (*He moves off Left across a dark stage, crooning the first lines of*)—

The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
And it is well-nigh day,
And Harry the King is gone a-hunting,
To bring a deer. . . .

(*A door shuts. Presently the clock strikes three.*)

SIR TIRROLD.

Another hour !

MELLONEY.

(*Comes down stage in moonlight and sings in a little low voice*)—

Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

ACT II.

The same.

(JEMIMA JONES (14) *in a chair Left.* PETER JONES (15) *reading a folio in a chair Right.* MARIA JONES (12) *heard off, trying to pick out a tune on the piano with one finger.*)

JEMIMA.

Maria, do stop that noise. Lady Mento doesn't like it.

MARIA.

You know quite well she's gone out. She can't hear.

JEMIMA.

Well, I can. So stop. Peter!

(*No answer.*)

Peter! Peter! can't you answer?

PETER.

Oh, shut up!

JEMIMA.

No, but Peter——

PETER.

What d'you want?

JEMIMA.

Where's Susan?

PETER.

Gone upstairs. (*Relapses to book.*)

JEMIMA.

I say, Peter. Peter!

PETER.

Why don't you have the nerve killed, or have it out?

JEMIMA.

I want to ask you something.

PETER.

Well?

JEMIMA.

Peter, how are you enjoying this?

PETER.

This place do you mean, or your conversation? I'm not enjoying your conversation.

JEMIMA.

This place, of course.

PETER.

It's a jolly fine place, and this is a frightfully interesting old book about it.

JEMIMA.

Let me see.

PETER.

It's a cut above your sex. It's mostly in Latin.

JEMIMA.

Oh, we all know you're in the Sixth! But it's all in writing, Peter.

PETER.

Of course, you can only read print; I forgot.

JEMIMA.

I read a jolly sight more improving books than you do. I'll bet this is immoral, or you wouldn't like it so. I'll——

MARIA.

Chuck it, you two ; here's Bunny.

(*Enter* BUNNY, *Right.*)

PETER.

Hullo, Bunny ! Is it lunch time ?

BUNNY.

Getting on. Is my mother back yet ?

JEMIMA.

She's still with poor Mrs. Trenchard. She said don't wait.

BUNNY.

Has Miss Copshrews come yet ?

JEMIMA.

Lenda ? No. She telephoned. She won't be long.

PETER.

How did the sketch go, Bunny ?

BUNNY.

Pretty fair. It's in the studio, if you'd like to see it.

PETER.

I'd like to see it. (*Rising.*)

JEMIMA.

You'd better get ready for lunch first, Peter.

PETER.

(*Going Left.*) So'd you. I don't take quite such hours to tidy as you do.

JEMIMA.

No, you never wash.

PETER.

I don't. (*Goes to door.*) I bathe. (*At door.*)

Squish ! (*Exit. Then returns and says :*) Jemima ! Squish ! (*Exit.*)

JEMIMA.

You pig ! Come back and shut up your book. He always leaves his books about.

BUNNY.

What is it ? Oh, the Holtspur Book again. Our old manuscript. I can't follow most of it.

MARIA.

Peter says *he* can.

JEMIMA.

He would. He's always swanking.

MARIA.

You swank yourself.

JEMIMA.

Not more than anybody else.

MARIA.

Yes, you do.

JEMIMA.

No, I don't.

MARIA.

You do.

JEMIMA.

Who says so ?

MARIA.

Everybody says so.

JEMIMA.

There's no such person as everybody, so there. So squish flat. Now go and tidy, because I've got to see you tidy.

MARIA.

It isn't time yet.

JEMIMA.

Yes, it is. Isn't it, Bunny?

BUNNY.

Getting on, I should say.

MARIA.

I'm going to play "Holy, holy, holy," first.

JEMIMA.

No, you are not to, Maria.

MARIA.

Yes, I am. (*Runs off Right, and there is a squabble and banging of the piano.*)

JEMIMA.

(*As the notes of "Holy, holy, holy," rise.*) That's very, very irreligious, Maria. You naughty little thing!

MARIA.

I'll spit if you come any nearer. (*They are heard disputing away to the Right, off.*) I can spit jolly straight.

BUNNY.

(*When the noise dies.*) Oh, Lenda, come soon, come soon! I cannot bear this waiting. (*Goes to portrait Right. Lenda's father.*) The profile's like her. (*Comes down.*) She will be here now at any minute. Was that the car? No, I don't think she will have me. I'm such a duffer. (*He sits on table, Centre, and looks Right.*) Listen. No, it is not she. What shall I do if she won't have me? I don't think I'll want to live.

(*Enter the ghost of* MELLONEY, *Left.*)

(BUNNY *comes right down stage.*) I used to mock at people being sick with love, but I don't mock

now. I pity poor women in love. If it's like this to me, who am a man, what must it be to them ?

(*The stage darkens.*)

I can't live in this state of suspense. Who is that there ? Is that you, Susan ? (*Looks up, Left.*) I thought I saw some one. No, there's no one.

MELLONEY.

Courage, Bunny.

BUNNY.

Courage ! Courage ! But what use is courage in love ?

MELLONEY.

Love is courage.

BUNNY.

This thing is driving me mad. I keep thinking I hear a voice.

(*Exit* MELLONEY, *Right.*) (SUSAN (II) *entering Left.*)

SUSAN.

Hullo, Bunny ! (*Enters Left.*)

BUNNY.

Oh, Susan, my dear, come and keep me company. Where have you been ?

SUSAN.

Having a lovely time.

BUNNY.

What, all by yourself ?

SUSAN.

No, indeed.

BUNNY.

But the others have been down here ragging. Were you with Kezia ?

SUSAN.

No, I was with the lovely lady.

BUNNY.

Oh! which lady is that? Do you mean my mother?

SUSAN.

(*Going to* MELLONEY'S *picture.*) No. That.

BUNNY.

That?

SUSAN.

Yes. Didn't you see her?

BUNNY.

I? Just now, do you mean?

SUSAN.

Yes. I heard you talking to her.

BUNNY.

I was talking to myself.

SUSAN.

She said she was going to comfort poor Bunny. Did you want to be comforted?

BUNNY.

What on earth does the child mean? Comforted? One has bad moods sometimes. Tell me about this lovely lady.

SUSAN.

No.

BUNNY.

Do, Susan. Why won't you?

SUSAN.

I'm too happy.

BUNNY.

That's jolly. Happy at being here ?

(SUSAN *nods.*)

BUNNY.

You must come here often, then.

SUSAN.

I was always afraid of coming before, but not now ; it's such a happy house. You see, it's her home.

BUNNY.

The lady's ? Yes.

SUSAN.

I never knew where she lived till to-day. Were you ever ill here, Bunny ?

BUNNY.

No. I've never been ill. And I've only lived here a little while.

SUSAN.

When I was at home I was ill once and had to live in bed—scarlet fever. Oh, it was lovely at nights ! She used to come to sit by my bed and put her arm round me.

BUNNY.

Was that the first time you ever saw her ?

SUSAN.

Yes, but of course I always thought of her before that ; ever since I can remember.

BUNNY.

And then, when you had scarlet fever, she came ?

SUSAN.

Oh, I was glad when she came, for of course when she was there the little devil-man couldn't tickle me.

BUNNY.

Did he before ?

SUSAN.

He tickled me and tried to put me down the well.

BUNNY.

But she stopped that ? That must have been blessed.

SUSAN.

That wasn't the blessedest thing. That is when she sings. When she sings, all the dear little bunny rabbits come out of the wall, and the dear little robins, and all the people who live here—I don't mean you, but Him.

BUNNY.

The man in the picture ?

SUSAN.

No. He doesn't ; but the Man in Armour does, and he puts back his helmet and opens his side, and the man in the red coat comes, and all the others who live here.

BUNNY.

All to hear the song ? What song does she sing ?

SUSAN.

I shan't tell you.

BUNNY.

Oh, Susan ! won't you tell poor old Bunny ?

SUSAN.

No. Unless you promise not to tell.

BUNNY.

I won't tell.

SUSAN.

Promise.

BUNNY.

Faithfully.

SUSAN.

Clean potato ; deal with you for ever ?

BUNNY.

Clean potato ; deal with me for ever.

SUSAN.

It's a very religious song about a prophet.

BUNNY.

Has it a name ?

SUSAN.

Yes. The Seer Demur. Seer means a prophet, 'cos I looked it out.

BUNNY.

Yes. And what does the Seer Demur do in the song ? What does the song mean ?

SUSAN.

It hasn't got a meaning ; it's religious, like in church.

BUNNY.

Ah ! yes. And has she been singing to you to-day ?

SUSAN.

All the time, Bunny. Oh, Bunny, I think something very important is going to happen, 'cos I'm so happy.

BUNNY.

I think so, too, my dear.

SUSAN.

Haven't you heard her singing ?

BUNNY.

No.

SUSAN.

But listen. She's singing there.

(*Very faintly off, Left, the voice of* MELLONEY *is heard, singing.*)

MELLONEY.

Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

(*A door shuts and kills the noise.*)

BUNNY.

That's the voice that I used to hear when I stayed here when I was little . . . and then, just now.

SUSAN.

This is a very, very, very happy house, Bunny.

BUNNY.

I hope it always will be, Susan.

SUSAN.

Bunny, do you think I could kiss the lovely lady? (*Going Back.*)

BUNNY.

Kiss a picture, my dear? I wouldn't.

SUSAN.

You would; for I saw you kiss that little one on your desk this morning.

BUNNY.

Oh! You see too much. Well, kiss her, then.

SUSAN.

(*Kissing portrait.*) Good-bye, lovely lady. Now here's Kezia, to make me wash my hands for lunch.

(*Enter* KEZIA, *Left.*)

KEZIA.

Now, come along, Miss Mischief, to wash those little puddocks.

SUSAN.

(*To her fingers.*) Mr. Long Larder and Miss Etty Bodkin, you must come and be washed. (*Exit Left.*)

(*When they have gone,* BETHIA *enters Right.*)

BETHIA.

(*Speaking to some one still off.*) I'm afraid her ladyship hasn't come back yet. Oh, Master Bunny! it's Miss Copshrews, Master Bunny.

BUNNY.

Oh, I say, thank you, Bethia. Talking to Susan, I never heard your car. Come in! Come in!

(*Enter* LENDA COPSHREWS, *Right. She is tall, dark, quick, with a fine kindling profile and lion-like carriage of the head. Enter silently, behind* LENDA, *the ghost of* LONNY COPSHREWS. *He remains at Back Right, while* LENDA *comes down stage to shake hands Right Centre with* BUNNY.)

LENDA.

How do you do . . . Bunny?

BUNNY.

Well, Lenda; I am glad to welcome you here at last.

LENDA.

I'm sorry to be late; I punctured.

BUNNY.

Mother's gone to see an old tenant who is ill. She will be back directly. She'll be grieved not to

be the first to welcome you. We'll be lunching in a few minutes. Would you like to go to your room ?

LENDA.

Thank you, but not for just one minute, Bunny. I'd like to take it all in.

BUNNY.

Do you remember this room ?

LENDA.

I remember the Man in Armour. Or I think I do. It is like a memory of a dream. Was my father often in this room ?

BUNNY.

Often. He didn't draw here, because of the light. I'll show you where he drew later on. It was in the North Room, my grandfather's study, where the pictures were burned. But he was in this hall often. This is his portrait, Lenda. (*He unhooks it and brings it down for her to see.*)

LENDA.

So that is the portrait. It is one of his best.

BUNNY.

It is like you, in a way, in profile.

LENDA.

Poor father !

BUNNY.

I'll put it on the table, while I fetch you the other ; the one of my aunt. This is the one he did of Aunt Melloney. (*He brings it down stage to her, to her Left.*)

LENDA.

It is very beautiful. A different type from your mother, Bunny. I've known this face all my life. My grandfather always kept a photograph of this Miss Holtspur on his desk.

BUNNY.

They were great friends. And she saw you often when you were little.

LENDA.

I wish I could remember her, Bunny.

BUNNY.

Can't you ?

LENDA.

No. Except that, standing here, I have a sort of memory of some one in white standing by the Man in Armour. But I wasn't three when I left here, Bunny.

BUNNY.

I know. You know, Lenda, I can't remember her, but I have a sort of memory, like yours, of some one in white, here, singing a plaintive song. Do you remember Kezia Spinfield, our old housekeeper ?

LENDA.

No.

BUNNY.

She remembers both you and your father. Of course, she was here then. You must talk to her about him.

LENDA.

It is wonderful to be here, where my father was. It means more to me than I can say.

BUNNY.

Lenda, this portrait of your father ought to belong to you. We've no right to it. I want you to let me give it to you. Will you ? To mark your first coming here ?

LENDA.

Oh, Bunny, no. But how beautiful of you to

think of it! You say you have no right to it. He thought you had. I was reading his papers only this morning. He calls this the only place where he had ever been happy. These things were his thanks to you.

BUNNY.

Mayn't they now be my thanks to you, Lenda, for all the happiness you've brought to me?

LENDA.

I couldn't take them, Bunny; they belong here. We'll put them in their places.

BUNNY.

Oh, Lenda, dear, don't cry, dear!

LENDA.

I'm not crying, Bunny. It's only a little gush of pity that he was only happy here, though he could do these things. Is this how the hook goes? No, there.

BUNNY.

It is the one boast of this house that he was happy here, Lenda.

LENDA.

The world was hell to him, all through his life; and through fire and chance and fate his best works are lost, and yet the world calls him "a wasted life."

BUNNY.

Is not that what happens with all great work? Only half is allowed. The powers of evil prevent more.

LENDA.

The powers of evil are in men and women, Bunny. It is the poor thing in us that makes poverty.

BUNNY.

Ah, Lenda ! I feel that there are powers of good and evil always outside us, ready to enter in. But I know one thing, Lenda, that it is the glorious thing in you that makes me glorious. I've felt like a man transfigured ever since I saw you first. I know I'm not clever like you, nor wise, nor beautiful, nor anything, but all there is of me just worships you. I love you down to the depth, Lenda.

LENDA.

You should not have said that, Bunny.

BUNNY.

What ? About depths ?

LENDA.

Yes, for I'm my father's daughter. There are depths in me.

BUNNY.

And if there are, I'll love you for them and beyond them.

LENDA.

I believe you would, and it's very sweet to be so loved, Bunny. But you ought not to have depths in your life, Bunny ; only heights and happiness.

BUNNY.

I know what I want in life. You. I've never been in love before. I know I never can be again. I know I'm not good enough for you. Who can be ? Who could be ? It isn't always merit that decides this, thank God ; that's why I speak. If you can't have me, you can't, and I won't ever even speak of it again. I didn't mean to now. It's a mean advantage when you are my guest. Only you're too beautiful not to upset me, after I've been waiting

all these hours. So there it is, beloved, and God bless you.

LENDA.

Yes, there it is, Bunny ; as you say.

BUNNY.

I didn't think you could care for me, Lenda ; that was too mad a hope.

LENDA.

Bunny, have you been suffering like this ever since we met ?

BUNNY.

Yes, though it has been happy suffering.

LENDA.

Ever since the Wrocester Hunt Ball ?

BUNNY.

Yes. You came into the ballroom in white, with that sparkle thing in your hair. You came with the Colways, and looked round for some one.

LENDA.

And that was the end of your peace ?

BUNNY.

I don't call it that. I say it was the beginning of my glory, for to love you is glory enough.

LENDA.

And then Mrs. Boveney introduced you ?

BUNNY.

Yes. God bless her !

LENDA.

I pray God bless her, too, Bunny, for the same reason.

BUNNY.

You mean it has meant a little, even to you ?

LENDA.

It has meant more than a little to me, Bunny.

BUNNY.

Lenda darling, I know you won't torture me. How much more has it meant ?

LENDA.

I think it has meant just everything, Bunny, since first I looked into your eyes.

BUNNY.

Then you care for me, Lenda, as I care for you ?

LENDA.

Not care for you, Bunny ; I love you, my darling.

BUNNY.

Oh, Lenda, my beloved !

LENDA.

It's too great joy, isn't it ?

BUNNY.

Almost. It's the greatest joy that ever could be. Oh, Lenda, you are marvellous ! (*Gazing.*)

LENDA.

My little Bunny !

BUNNY.

I wish I could see my image in your eyes.

LENDA.

Your image is in my heart, beloved.

(*They kiss, and then kiss again.*)

BUNNY.

And how are we to come back into the world, after that ?

LENDA.

With a new heart and new eyes.

BUNNY.

Please God, this old hall will be happy to you as it was to your father. I think this old house must be glad of our joy, Lenda. All the fifteen generations of Holtspurs must have felt, as we feel, in this hall. They must be here still.

LENDA.

And perhaps my father, too. I hope so.

BUNNY.

I hope so too. And what we hope comes.

(KEZIA SPINFIELD *enters, Left.*)

KEZIA.

Mr. Bunny, little Miss Susan says you promised to blow her some bubbles while she is washing her hands.

BUNNY.

I did. I'll come, Kezia.

KEZIA.

She says she'd come herself to call you, but she's all soapy.

BUNNY.

Lenda, I don't think you've met our old friend, Miss Kezia Spinfield. Miss Copshrews, Kezia.

(KEZIA *mumbles.*)

LENDA.

Why, you're the kind friend who gave me the

sugar-candy on little bits of string. I've thought of you so often. How do you do ?

KEZIA.

I'm very well, I thank you, Miss Copshrews.

BUNNY.

Well, you will talk about those old times while I blow Susan some bubbles. I won't be a minute. (*He hurries off, Left.*)

LENDA.

Is Moo-moo alive, still ?

KEZIA.

You mean Myrtle West, miss, that used to be the under-housemaid here ?

LENDA.

Yes. I always called her Moo-moo. I couldn't say Myrtle. She used to give me rides round the garden.

KEZIA.

No ; she is dead, miss.

LENDA.

Ah ! How did she die ?

KEZIA.

She got into trouble, miss, and perhaps it was better as it was.

LENDA.

Where is she buried ?

KEZIA.

In the waste bit at Naunton Crucis, for, you see, miss, she took her own life, before her child was born.

LENDA.

And they would not bury her in the churchyard ?

KEZIA.

No, miss.

LENDA.

The brutes! I'll go to-morrow and put flowers on her grave.

KEZIA.

God has done that, miss, for poor Moo-moo, for every year her grave comes up with the crocus, and afterwards the wild forget-me-not. And the little daisies are as many as stars.

LENDA.

Poor Moo-moo! There was no harm in her; nothing but fun. She was like a happy bird, singing. Do you remember my father coming here, and painting?

KEZIA.

Yes, Miss Copshrews.

LENDA.

I never knew my father. Can you tell me something about him, some memory of him, so that I can think of him here?

KEZIA.

Yes, Miss Copshrews, I can.

LENDA.

That will be beautiful to me, if you will.

KEZIA.

I knew your father, Miss Copshrews, as a servant knows a visitor; without any pretence. God forgive me and him and all of us, but he brought nothing but evil upon this house.

LENDA.

Evil? How?

KEZIA.

It is over, Miss Copshrews, as far as evil can be ; with the people dead. But even poor Myrtle West was due to him.

LENDA.

That is nonsense ; he died while she was still here, and he was dying for a year before that.

KEZIA.

Miss Copshrews, long before your father's death he brought a French friend here, a Doctor Rémy. They used to go sketching together. Afterwards the doctor was often here, staying in the village. He was a young man and a handsome man, and he flattered the girl with painting her portrait, and brought her to her grave.

LENDA.

But how can you say that that was due to my father ?

KEZIA.

Miss Copshrews, if I'm uncharitable may God forgive me, but where the teaching errs, the heart strays. Like master, like pupil, in this world, Miss Copshrews, and like father, like child.

(*Enter* LADY MENTO, *Right.*)

Miss Copshrews, my lady.

(*Exit* KEZIA, *Left.*)

LADY M.

Ah, Miss Copshrews, so you are here ! I have been to see an old tenant who is ill. Has no one welcomed you ? Was not my son here ?

(*Enter* BUNNY, *Left.*)

BUNNY.

Yes, I was here, mother ; but I've been blowing

bubbles for Susan. How is Mrs. Trenchard, mother ?

LADY M.

Very ill and wandering. She hasn't spoken to me yet. I must go there again after lunch, in case she should speak before she dies. Miss Copshrews, this is a very funereal welcome. It is black like the day. Will you come with me, now, so that I may show you your room ?

LENDA.

Thank you.

BUNNY.

Mother, before you go, I must tell you that I've asked Lenda here to marry me, and we are engaged.

LENDA.

Will you trust your son to me ? I love him very, very dearly.

BUNNY.

And I her, mother.

LADY M.

My dear ! and Bunny ! I hardly know what to say, though I supposed that something like this might happen. I had hoped to have my son a little longer. Women cling to their possessions, looks, lovers and sons ; time takes them all ; time and other women. You are very like your father, whom I knew a little.

BUNNY.

Won't you kiss her, mother ?

LADY M.

That is your province to-day, my son. I have just come from the presence of death, and, I am afraid . . . of sin, and I am wondering at the meaning of it all, and whether there be a meaning. Will you come then, child ?

LENDA.

Won't you call me Lenda ?

(*They begin to move off to the Right.*)

LADY M.

Lenda. Is that from the Spanish word that means pretty ?

LENDA.

It was a name my father chose. It means me.

BUNNY.

To me it means everything.

(*They go out. It darkens.*)

(*When they are gone the ghost of* LONNY COPSHREWS *comes down to the table, Centre, while the ghost of* MELLONEY *advances up towards the table.* MELLONEY *is singing.*)

MELLONEY.

Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,
Chagrin d'amour——

(*She sees* LONNY.) Lonny ! Is that you, Lonny ?

LONNY.

Yes.

MELLONEY.

What are you doing here ?

LONNY.

I've come here with my daughter.

MELLONEY.

Your daughter, that you robbed me of. How dare you enter this house ?

LONNY.

I am with my daughter everywhere.

MELLONEY.

You are richer than I. I am with my misery everywhere. And you come back to taunt me.

LONNY.

I come back because my daughter is going to marry Bunny.

MELLONEY.

Marry Bunny ? Never ! She shall not.

LONNY.

They love each other, and there are the marks of happy love on both of them.

MELLONEY.

Your touch has done evil enough in this house. It shall not taint Bunny.

LONNY.

I want that old stain washed away by their happiness.

(MELLONEY *laughs.*)

LONNY.

Is it not time ?

MELLONEY.

Time ? So, because suffering has gone deep for twenty years, it should be forgotten ? How will their happiness wash away what you have done to me ? I was young. I was strong. I might have borne children and been happy and fulfilled myself. You broke me, body and soul. Now I am this. I had never known that there could be people like you in the world. How could I ? And all my love, all that was beautiful in me, all my morning, all my pride, for I used to be proud, were just nothing to you. I might not have had them. They weren't what you wanted.

LONNY.

That is not true.

MELLONEY.

What do you know of truth ? It is true.

LONNY.

I cared for nothing but those things, but I was a dirty hound none the less.

MELLONEY.

And you went on, just the same, as though nothing had happened. Any other woman would have done as well as I, who used to be Melloney. And since then you have had your daughter, and I nothing but suffering, a going down into the grave and walking in the body of death. But you shall now meet your punishment from this house that you have wronged.

LONNY.

How can you punish me ?

MELLONEY.

Thus. Come, all of you, dwellers of this house. And you, the founder of the house, Sir Tirrold Holtspur.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

The hour is come.

For many years the thoughts of justice spread the nets of justice in the hearts of men. Now the nets have brought you to the judgment and punishment of your sin.

LONNY.

I am already judged and punished. I am in hell.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

How ?

LONNY.

I know, now, that I might have been a great artist, and was not, through my own fault.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

You have been punished for your sin towards yourself, not yet for your sins to others. This might have been a happy woman, and was not through your fault.

LONNY.

I behaved to her with every infamy.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Her suffering has bred kites to tear your infamy.

LONNY.

And they have torn me.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Not yet to the inmost soul.

LONNY.

What worse suffering can they inflict ?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Your sin will be worked out on those you love.

LONNY.

I love her (*indicating* MELLONEY).

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

You love your daughter.

LONNY.

She is a child.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Sins are visited upon children.

LONNY.

If that be so, do not boast of it.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

I tell you the law. You will suffer through her, in the way decreed.

LONNY.

Two things will annul your decree. First, her innocence.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Innocence is the sword to guilt. What is your second thing ?

LONNY.

My virtue, which must atone for much.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

What was this virtue ?

LONNY.

This, that for all my wickedness, I cared for truth and beauty and colour ; three things which have never let man down. I was taunted and despised. I was ragged and starved. But I called those things noble with all my strength, all my life long.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Out of those things you made a bandage for your soul, so that you were blind, to reality.

LONNY.

What is reality ?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

The godhead of man. The brotherhood of man. The communion of spirits.

LONNY.

Words.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Pain shall make you see. (*He moves back to his place.*) Your punishment begins.

LONNY.

I will think my own thought in spite of every devil and every angel.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

You shall weep your sin. In spite of every virtue and every love.

LONNY.

I weep my sin in my own hell. Nothing that you can do can touch me further.

MELLONEY.

Your sin, finding you out, shall touch you further.

LONNY.

My shame, for what I did to you, is pain enough, Melloney.

MELLONEY.

It is not pain enough for me, viper.

LONNY.

Pour me poison, then, that I may drink.

(*Enter* LENDA *from Left Back. She comes down stage, Right.*)

MELLONEY.

This is the cup of your bitterness. (*She stares at* LENDA, *then moves away, Left Back, silently.*)

LONNY.

Lenda. Lenda.

(*She is unconscious of his presence. She picks up a book from the table R. A gong is beaten off, Left.* LONNY *moves away R. Back.*)

(BUNNY *enters Left Back. The* CHILDREN *enter from all points.*)

BUNNY.

Ah, Lenda! Now come along, you people.

LENDA.

How dark it is! It is going to thunder.

BUNNY.

It is going to pour.

PETER.

"A rain in May makes good June hay."

SUSAN.

There. Look at that! Lightning!

JEMIMA.

(*Counting.*) One, two, three, four. It's not very near. Five, six, seven.

(*There comes a crash of thunder with a spotting of rain.*)

Curtain.

ACT III.

The same.

(PETER *and* SUSAN *enter, Right Back. They come down Front.*)

PETER.

Now, Susan. This is what I want to examine. (*Goes to* MAN IN ARMOUR.) I believe there's treasure buried inside this old geezer-gee.

SUSAN.

Oh, Peter, how heavenly!

PETER.

What else can this poem in the book mean? (*Reads:*)

"Sir Tirrold Holtspur to all his house:
Holtspur, if thou beest ruinate, still trust
In my right arm to raise thee from the dust;
More than the half I tell thee, which, if 't fall
As 'tis most like, thy wit shall madrigal."

SUSAN.

It's a very geezer-gee-ish poem.

PETER.

Of course it is. He wanted people to think it tosh because it's a hint where the treasure is buried. "Trust in my right arm." The right arm's the clue. (*Climbs on a chair Right.*) I can't see all his gauntlets, he's gripping his horn so hard.

SUSAN.

Is there a secret spring ?

PETER.

I haven't spotted one yet, but live and learn. I say : some stuff, this armour. Jolly useful kit for rugger. He doesn't seem to have any give anywhere.

SUSAN.

Job him in the plexus. (*Climbing up.*) Try that knobby thing.

PETER.

(*Trying.*) No. Besides, that isn't on his arm.

SUSAN.

How did he scratch when he tickled ?

PETER.

I expect he Keating'd up, so as not to have to. Give the bolts a jab. No. They don't seem to move at all.

SUSAN.

Try the floppy thing on his elbow.

PETER.

(*Trying.*) No. I expect it would be some quite small thing like a nut.

SUSAN.

Try up at his shoulder.

PETER.

I tried all his shoulder first thing. Hand up that tumbler with the paraffin. (*Takes and oils armour.*)

SUSAN.

Peter, the place will stink of paraffin for weeks. What are you doing ?

PETER.

It'll soak in or evaporate. It'll oil up his joints. Then we'll come back presently and have a go with a screw-driver. Then he might open.

SUSAN.

Oh, hooray !

PETER.

It won't be hooray, I'm afraid. The old geezer-gee's a wash-out.

(*Enter* MARIA, *Left, on tiptoe.*)

MARIA.

Oh, Peter, have you found it ?

PETER.

No, not yet.

MARIA.

I expect it's been found, long ago. Bunny said they'd searched.

PETER.

I'll just lie down and squint up. I say, he's jolly well dripping paraffin, like billio. It's not *in* him.

MARIA.

I expect it's a wash-out. Come on out.

SUSAN.

Just let me have a go.

MARIA.

I'm afraid it's no go. Do you see anything, Susan ?

SUSAN.

Only pools of paraffin.

MARIA.

Well, come along out. He's a dud.

PETER.

I'm afraid so. Where's Jemima ?

MARIA.

Gone to the Woman's Institute.

PETER.

She would. Well, he's a dud. Did the papers come ?

MARIA.

Yes.

PETER.

Anything about the Rushton case ?

MARIA.

Oh yes, Peter ; they've found the body.

SUSAN.

Oh, hooray ! Where ?

PETER.

Was it murder ?

MARIA.

Yes. She'd been flung down the well. And they found the hammer that did the deed. There's a heavenly picture of the hammer.

PETER.

Come on ; let's come and see.

SUSAN.

And then let's go out and go on with our cave in the shrubbery.

MARIA.

Yes, let's. Come on, Peter.

PETER.

All right. I've bagged some wire to keep up the sides.

SUSAN.

Come on. It will be simply heavenly.

(MARIA *and* SUSAN *skip off Left Back.*)

Come along, Peter, before Jemima comes back.

PETER.

I'm just coming. (*When they are gone, he says :*) By Jove, it might not be his arm. It might be the Holtspur cock's arm, in the crest up above. A jolly good idea. I'll give it a good old prod with the poker. (*Does so.*) No. Nothing doing. But I'll give it another prod. (*Does so.*) That sent the plaster down inside somewhere. (*Gives a third prod.*) Golly, I nearly had the whole thing down. No more. (*He puts down poker and exit, Left. As he goes out, the panel joggles slowly down, opens the hiding-place wide, and then very slowly joggles up and shuts. It does this with a rhythmical, distinctive noise.*)

(BUNNY *enters, Right Back.*)

BUNNY.

No. She is not here, mother.

(*Enter* LADY MENTO, *R. Back.*)

LADY M.

Just call her, will you, Bunny ? She must be with the children. (*She goes to table, Centre.*)

BUNNY.

(*Calling Left Back*). Lenda !

LENDA.

(*Off.*) Yes.

BUNNY.

Can you come to us for a moment ? We are in the hall.

LENDA.

(*Enters Left Back.*) Here I am. Oh, Lady Mento! I hope that your tenant is better.

(MELLONEY *enters at Left Back and remains there during the scene.*)

LADY M.

Poor Minnie Trenchard can never be better in this world, my dear child. She cannot live through another day, and it is better so. I have talked to her and she is easier in her mind. I would like now to speak to you.

LENDA.

Certainly, Lady Mento. Shall it be here?

LADY M.

Yes. I have had a very terrible day. It is about your father, Lenda, that I wish to speak to you. Bunny, I am very tired; will you bring me a chair here to the table?

(BUNNY *brings chair.*)

Thank you, Bunny. (*She sits.*) (*To* LENDA.) Minnie heard, somehow, that you were to be here, and that led to her sending for me. It is strange. She had not meant to tell me much; but in the thunder this afternoon she heard as it were a voice commanding her to tell me everything. So she has spoken out her heart.

LENDA.

Will you tell me, Lady Mento, who this Mrs. Trenchard is, or was?

LADY M.

She is the widow of James Trenchard. She farms her late husband's small farm at Knott Green here. She *was* Minnie Bracknell, once maid to old Mrs. Holyport, at Nap Hill.

LENDA.

Thank you.

LADY M.

You know that as your father was unlike other men in intellect, so he was in other ways.

LENDA.

Yes, one sees that from his face.

LADY M.

No doubt. Since you know that, you may perhaps be prepared for the confession which was made to me to-day.

LENDA.

I hope so, Lady Mento.

LADY M.

I trust so. Your father came to know Mrs. Trenchard, then Minnie Bracknell, after his return from Greece. It seems that they lived together at Tatchester for some months, unknown to anybody here.

LENDA.

If they cared for each other, Lady Mento, I am glad that they had that happiness.

LADY M.

It was no happiness, Lenda. Sin cannot bring happiness in this world.

LENDA.

Forgetfulness, then.

LADY M.

Forgetfulness of much that none should ever forget. While they were living thus, your father told his companion that he had often been in this

house and had searched it for secrets, apparently in order that he might turn them to account.

LENDA.

What were the exact words used, Lady Mento?

LADY M.

That was the exact meaning.

LENDA.

It is important to me, Lady Mento, that the exact words should be given, so that I may know the exact charge made.

LADY M.

These were the words: "He told me that he had often searched Holtspur House for secrets that he might use." I will not be certain whether she said "he might use" or "might be of use." Remember, she is a dying woman and spoke with difficulty.

LENDA.

I remember. Did she say that he had found secrets?

LADY M.

Yes. He had.

LENDA.

And used them, or abused them?

LADY M.

My child, it is very painful to me to have to tell you that he abused them . . . terribly . . . in a terrible way.

BUNNY.

Mother, darling, shall we not let this old dead past be, and forget it, and forgive it? All this cannot matter to any living soul now; it is long since utterly at an end. Lenda is our guest and my love.

LENDA.

Bunny, dear, all this is very, very interesting to me. Let me hear it to the end. Will you go on, Lady Mento, if you are not too tired? In what way did my father abuse his knowledge?

LADY M.

It is not easy for me to tell you.

BUNNY.

It is not easy for Lenda to listen.

LADY M.

No, my dear boy, it is not. And this that I have to tell you will be more bitter than anything that has gone before.

LENDA.

Let me hear it then, and know the worst.

LADY M.

It seems that many years ago, when your father was painting those portraits, he discovered from some book, evidently the Holtspur Book here on the table, the whereabouts of a secret hiding-place in which a former Holtspur had hidden family jewels. Your father boasted to his accomp—— companion that those jewels which he found had been "as good as the bank to him."

LENDA.

Meaning that he had stolen and sold them?

LADY M.

I know no other interpretation that can be put upon such words.

LENDA.

Let that be the interpretation. The woman is dying and speaking the truth.

BUNNY.

But is that so, mother? She is at the point of death, and speaking from memory of a time long past, and, as you said just now, she was in some hallucination, thinking that she heard voices.

LADY M.

Unfortunately, her statement seems to be borne out by these papers which she gave me. These are two inventories of jewels in the handwriting of Sir Jotham Holtspur, who wrote this book. On each inventory is a note in your father's hand. "Got for this lot £127 10*s.*, Buck and Littlewick." On the other, "Fetched only a hundred guineas. Binfields." Both notes dated twenty-seven years ago.

LENDA.

(*Comparing the script with the book.*) Yes. Sir Jotham wrote the inventories and I think my father wrote the notes.

BUNNY.

But, my dear mother, that doesn't prove that the jewels existed, or that they were found here or sold, or that Mr. Copshrews sold them, or that he stole them if he did sell then. If he did sell them at all, it was probably as grandfather's agent. He was always buying and selling pictures and things for grandfather, and got a commission for doing so, and jolly well deserved it. The commission on these two sales, if they were sales, would have been about £24, or quite "as good as the bank" to an artist under twenty-five.

LADY M.

Your defence occurred to me, Bunny; but your grandfather kept exact accounts of all such com-

missions in these private journals. No such transactions as these two are mentioned in these volumes here.

LENDA.

Did Mr. Holtspur, your father, ever mention the jewels ?

LADY M.

Never. I am certain that he never knew of their existence.

LENDA.

Let us call this non proven for the moment. I will thrash it all out with the buyers, if they can be traced. Binfields, you said, and Buck and Littlewick.

BUNNY.

Buck and Littlewick are art dealers in Ryder Street, St. James's.

LENDA.

Good. So my father lived in sin, and may or may not have stolen the plate. Was any other charge brought against him ?

LADY M.

Yes.

LENDA.

May I hear it ?

LADY M.

Yes. While he and Mrs. Trenchard were living thus they became short of money. Your father was not then working at his profession. Bunny, will you draw the curtain from your Aunt Melloney's portrait ?

(*He does so.*)

That is my dead sister, Melloney, who was at that time living here. It seems that she cherished

some affection for your father and that your father knew this. . . .

LENDA.

Yes, Lady Mento ?

LADY M.

And presumed upon it.

LENDA.

In what way did he presume upon it ?

LADY M.

By sending his companion to her for money to relieve their want.

LENDA.

Which she granted ?

LADY M.

Three times, to the extent of more than one hundred and eighty pounds.

LENDA.

And what happened then ?

LADY M.

Your father fell ill and he and Minnie parted. Mr. Boveney found your father and cared for him until he died. Minnie came home. Presently young James Trenchard married her, knowing nothing of all this till long afterwards, when it hastened his end, poor man.

LENDA.

I wish that Mrs. Trenchard had sent for me, to tell me all this.

LADY M.

She sent for me, Lenda, because she felt that a wrong had been done to this house.

LENDA.

By my father ?

LADY M.

I do not say by your father ; by the two of them together.

LENDA.

And I am afraid that you feel that, too, Lady Mento.

LADY M.

I feel only miserable.

LENDA.

It is miserable that the child of such a father should enter this house . . . on other terms.

LADY M.

My dear, whatever my feelings may be, I have laid the case before you fairly, without prejudice, without passing judgment.

LENDA.

Why did you lay it before me ?

LADY M.

It was the dying woman's request that you should know.

LENDA.

Did the voice bid her ?

LADY M.

So she said, and believed. And it is better that you should know. And surely better that you should know that I know !

LENDA.

You are not wholly displeased, Lady Mento, that these revelations should come, at this time ?

LADY M.

There were objections to your engagement to my son before these revelations were made to me.

BUNNY.

None that will have any weight with me, mother.

LADY M.

Yes, Bunny, objections that must have weight with you. We are now poor, and your father's firm is involved; you must marry wealth, or work to restore it. You have talents, and I mean you to have a career, apart from this trivial painting and philandering. My son's honour is pledged to this house.

LENDA.

And my honour is pledged to him.

LADY M.

That being so, it is for him to be scrupulous towards you. He has no means and no profession, and obligations elsewhere.

BUNNY.

Mother, that is true of nine out of ten young men. Every man is a waster till he marries. I shall work for Lenda.

LADY M.

At what?

BUNNY.

I shall go into the firm.

LADY M.

That, my son, I think you will not be able to do, if you marry Miss Copshrews.

LENDA.

Why not, Lady Mento?

LADY M.

It would not seem to me to be fitting.

LENDA.

Lady Mento, I am poor, by worldly standards, but I am no beggar and I am not a fool. I count myself a fitting match for any man in this kingdom.

LADY M.

I do not say that you are not ; far from it. But I heard even now something more about your father which makes you no match for my son.

LENDA.

And this something you have kept as a trump card.

LADY M.

I dearly hoped, Lenda, not to be forced to repeat it.

LENDA.

You have few sins left to repeat, Lady Mento. What is the *bonne bouche ?* I hope a good one. His vices are not grand hitherto. Did he murder ?

LADY M.

Not with a knife or poison, but by subtler wickedness. I know now that in the eyes of God he was the murderer of my sister Melloney, whose love he won and whose heart he broke wantonly and wilfully, a few months after his marriage to your mother. Now I understand my poor sister's wretchedness and death. Knowing this, it is impossible for me to receive you as my daughter.

LENDA.

Lady Mento, I am very proud of my father. He was not a normal man ; I know that. He was weak, he was wicked ; very wicked, if you like. I should not wonder. From the time he was born he had no help, no guidance ; nothing was done for

him, nothing was smoothed for him. He fought and suffered from boyhood on. In spite of all that, he was one of the best painters of his time. I say that that eminence points to greatness of soul, whatever sins he did. And I'd rather be his daughter than a crowned queen. Do not speak to me now, Bunny; do not touch me. I have been here too long. My place is with that poor woman, who is the last soul on earth who loved my father. If they will let me, I will be by her till she die. (*She goes off Right.*)

LADY M.

So, my son, we come to the parting of the ways.

BUNNY.

Yes, mother.

LADY M.

Will you, too, go to Mrs. Trenchard's, to this cast mistress of a thief?

BUNNY.

Don't hit below the belt, mother. I haven't gone, for your sake.

LADY M.

Thank you, Bunny.

BUNNY.

Thank me? For failing my love?

LADY M.

For not breaking your mother's heart, Bunny.

BUNNY.

The past only exists as somebody's prejudice.

LADY M.

That is so, my son. Bunny, my dear, what will you do, my darling?

BUNNY.

Mother, I think you'd better not talk to me for the moment, any more.

LADY M.

Very well, Bunny. (*She comes towards him.*) My dear boy ! My dear boy ! (*She kneels suddenly and kisses his hand.*) You don't know how I love you.

BUNNY.

Mother, if I did not know, do you think I would have kept silence, as I have ? Come. We will not talk of this. You must rest.

LADY M.

Rest ? While a murderer's daughter takes my son.

BUNNY.

She is not that. Do not you call her so.

LADY M.

He killed my sister, after robbing her. Can you marry her, knowing that ?

BUNNY.

Marry her ? Surely you see that Lenda will never marry me after this.

LADY M.

Women are not so sensitive where their love's concerned.

BUNNY.

Not sensitive ? To outrage.

LADY M.

Bunny, my son, this is the only shadow that has ever come between us.

BUNNY.

This is more than a shadow, mother. Why did you let her come here ?

LADY M.

So that I might watch her with you.

BUNNY.

But why tell her all this ?

LADY M.

In justice to my dead sister, whom I feel to-night like a living soul, outraged by Miss Copshrews' presence here. Then from my love for you, that would screen you from the taint of that leper.

BUNNY.

That leper, as you call him, kindled the souls of thousands by the purity of his thought.

LADY M.

And blasted all who touched him.

BUNNY.

Perhaps, mother, that is what great motives do. They blast people. Your great motives have blasted her to the heart and me, too.

LADY M.

Bunny. Bunny. That is not true, my boy.

BUNNY.

It is true. You have parted us. She will leave this house to-night. Well, I shall leave it to-morrow.

LADY M.

Oh, Bunny, where will you go ?

BUNNY.

That cannot matter, I should think.

(*He goes out Back Right.* LADY MENTO *stands like one stunned, then comes down stage blindly.*)

LADY M.

When we lay them in the cradle for the first time, we know that some day this will happen. (*She goes out Front Left.*)

(MELLONEY *comes down from Left Back.*)

MELLONEY.

O blessed heaven, it is sweet to see her thwarted. She has it to the heart now. She will not glory again in her father. If I might do one thing more to them! If I might wreck these paintings, which make his fame! Then I might rest, then I might rest. (*She moves off to the Centre, down stage.*) Here is this little child. She might help me.

(*Enter* SUSAN, *Right Back.*)

Susan, my little one! (*She goes Left, by fire.*)

SUSAN.

Ah! It is the lovely lady. Yes?

MELLONEY.

Come to me by the fire here, to watch the sparks.

(SUSAN *goes.*)

You love watching the sparks, don't you?

SUSAN.

Yes, I love it awfully much.

MELLONEY.

Don't you love them when they cling to the chimney?

SUSAN.

Yes, when they breathe on the soot.

MELLONEY.

What do you mean by " breathe on the soot " ?

SUSAN.

There. When they glow out and then glow in. It's like a snake breathing.

MELLONEY.

Or like armies of little glittering men.

SUSAN.

Or little butterflies flying away home.

MELLONEY.

They aren't green enough for glow-worms. Do you see cities in the coals ?

SUSAN.

Cities all made of white gold.

MELLONEY.

What a pity that we have not some salt to make lovely blue flame ?

SUSAN.

Oh, I love blue flame !

MELLONEY.

Yes. Isn't it beautiful ? But other things, besides salt, will make coloured flames. Shall we make some ?

SUSAN.

Oh, do let's ! What can we use ?

MELLONEY.

It's such a long way to the kitchen for salt. But won't you go to fetch a piece ?

SUSAN.

Couldn't we make some with something here ?

MELLONEY.

The cover of that magazine, perhaps.

SUSAN.

No, that's Jemima's. Besides, the thick paper spoils the fire so.

MELLONEY.

I know what we could use.

SUSAN.

What ?

MELLONEY.

Will you unhook that picture and bring it here ? (*Points R.*)

SUSAN.

(*Unhooking* LONNY'S *portrait and bringing it.*) Here it is.

MELLONEY.

That is the very thing.

SUSAN.

Do you mean the frame ?

MELLONEY.

No, the whole thing. It's only an ugly old thing and quite time we had a new one. It will make marvellous flames.

SUSAN.

All blue and green, like salt does ?

MELLONEY.

Yes, and perhaps scarlet, too.

SUSAN.

Will it really ?

MELLONEY.

Yes, indeed.

SUSAN.

I would love to see scarlet fire. Would it be like Fifth-of-November ?

MELLONEY.

Yes, like coloured flares.

SUSAN.

Oh, how lovely !

MELLONEY.

Well, you put it into the fire and then you will see.

SUSAN.

Won't the glass break and hurt me ?

MELLONEY.

No ; it will crack ; it won't fly out. It cannot hurt you. You see that place between the two logs. Put the picture into that. Shall I give you the word ? One, two three ?

SUSAN.

One, to make ready,
Two, to make steady,
And three, away ?

MELLONEY.

Yes. And then, at " three " the lovely scarlet flames will climb all over the logs.

SUSAN.

What would make it go like that ?

MELLONEY.

There are chemicals in the paint. Now, one to make ready. What are you waiting for?

SUSAN.

No. I'm not going to burn it, if there's chemicals in it.

MELLONEY.

Why not, dear ?

SUSAN.

Peter put some chemicals in the fire once. He set the house on fire.

MELLONEY.

But these are not like those.

SUSAN.

They might be. You can't ever tell, with chemicals.

MELLONEY.

I can tell, my darling.

SUSAN.

Father said, " No one can tell." He said, " We might have burned ourselves to little white bones."

MELLONEY.

I will not let you come to any harm.

SUSAN.

No. You put it on the fire.

MELLONEY.

Ah, child, would that I could ! There was a little boy here once who burned some pictures for me, in the other room. They were just like these pictures. They burned all up. They were not dangerous.

SUSAN.

And were the flames lovely ?

MELLONEY.

Lovely. The loveliest flames I ever saw. The loveliest that ever were on this earth. But nothing to what the flames of these would be. You're not going to be outdone by a little boy, are you ? I thought you were braver than that. Come, my

darling, we'll burn the two pictures together. (*She moves to her own portrait.*)

SUSAN.

No, no, no! You shall not burn my lovely lady. That's wickedness, awful wickedness. We might both be smitten dead for burning you.

MELLONEY.

Dead . . . smitten dead . . . Why?

SUSAN.

Because it's a holy picture. You are an angel, Peter says. You are an angel, aren't you?

MELLONEY.

No, my beloved one, I am very, very far from being that.

SUSAN.

Then why did you come to me when I was ill in bed?

MELLONEY.

Because your father wanted to marry me once, Susan. That couldn't have been, of course. But you might have been my darling little daughter if it had been. I shall always be tender to you because of that.

SUSAN.

Aren't you tender to Peter and the others?

MELLONEY.

They cannot see me, as you can. They have not the power.

SUSAN.

But how can you go to the shiny place if you aren't an angel?

MELLONEY.

I do not go to any shiny place, Susan, and the

crowing of the cock is terrible to me. And I live here.

SUSAN.

Yes, I know. But why don't I always see you ?

MELLONEY.

I cannot always come, except at midnight.

SUSAN.

Because that's treasure time.

MELLONEY.

There is no treasure here, my darling Susan ; only old sorrow and old sin and old despair.

SUSAN.

Oh, lovely lady, don't cry ! I'll give you a whole kiss if you don't cry. I'll give you a kiss and a hug, and my Teddy bear Ed-a-ward.

MELLONEY.

I'm not crying, darling.

SUSAN.

You're the beautifullest lady. I want to say my hymn to you.

MELLONEY.

Ah, little one ! I am cast out from where they say hymns. But would you do something for me ?

SUSAN.

Oh, you know, you know I would ! Anything in the wide world.

(*Enter, very quietly*, KEZIA, *at Left Back.*)

MELLONEY.

Will you throw crumbs on my window-ledge, so that I may hear the little feet of the birds ?

SUSAN.

Is that all ?

MELLONEY.

No. If you could bring me snow-on-the-mountains, and forget-me-not, and dappled wallflowers, I would bless those holy flowers.

SUSAN.

I will, I will ; and Peter will.

MELLONEY.

And never think of me again as an angel, Susan. I am only Melloney Holtspur, who cannot rest, who cannot rest. (*She begins to pass up Back Right.*)

KEZIA.

Miss Melloney ! Miss Melloney ! Oh, my white flower, Miss Melloney !

(MELLONEY *seems to try to answer. It darkens.*)

Won't you speak to me ? Say one little word.

(*She seems to try to speak. It darkens.*)

I'm old Kezia, my darling.

(MELLONEY *vanishes.*)

Oh, Miss Melloney, come back out of the dead ! Come back !

SUSAN.

She can't always come, except at midnight.

KEZIA.

That was my Miss Melloney, darling, that you were talking to.

SUSAN.

Yes. She cannot rest.

KEZIA.

" Let mine eyes run down with tears, then, for the virgin daughter of my people is broken."

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

The same.

(*On the table is a bowl of forget-me-nots, snow-on-the-mountains, and dappled wallflowers. Midnight: moonlight and one light R.*)

(MELLONEY *enters Left Front and goes up Back Left.*)

MELLONEY.

Nothing but this hate like a living thing. If a bird would sing to us! Or if we could pick a flower! Or if we could begin again, like the spring! But she is coming.

(*Enter* LENDA *Right Back. She comes on and says:*)

LENDA.

Bunny! Bunny! So he is not here waiting for me. Very well. I do not stay in this house. I will leave word and go. (*She sits at table and begins to write.*)

MELLONEY.

I looked like that, felt like that, wrote like that. The world is gone from below your feet. All the trust in your soul is gone to hell-fire. Now, you part of him, you have it.

LENDA.

There, there is what I think of them. (*She slaps down the letter on the table, rises and comes down.*) I do not care. I do not care. I belong with the artists, not with these, these properties. (*She goes swiftly up and off Left Back.*)

MELLONEY.

Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,
Chagrin d'amour dure . . .

(*As she sings,* LONNY *silently enters, goes down Right, and kneels in supplication facing Back.*)

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

What does this guilty one want ?

LONNY.

Mercy.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Had you mercy ?

LONNY.

No.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

You are answered.

LONNY.

I want mercy for my daughter. She should not bear my sin.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

You sowed. You reap.

LONNY.

Then I am in the lowest pit of hell.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

You are in the pit you digged.

LONNY.

No, but I did the crime. My daughter is innocent. . . . Innocent.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

So was your victim.

LONNY.

I know it. Let me burn for it. Only spare that lovely little soul.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

We cannot.

LONNY.

You can, you can.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

We are powerless. You set the wheel of the law moving. It has to go on, to fulfilment.

LONNY.

But she may be crushed utterly by it.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

You will see your results.

LONNY.

Then I have blasted her life.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Results come home.

LONNY.

Then it is all doggery and devilry and there is no God and no mercy. And we are all mad dogs, mad as hell, biting. I could make a better world.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Your power to make is dead.

LONNY.

Then I will unmake, till men blow out life like a candle and there are no men born to suffer.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Your power to unmake is dead.

LONNY.

Then I will unsettle. I will be a dream and a

madness in men's minds until they thwart this purpose.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Your power to unsettle is dead. All your powers, save one, are dead.

LONNY.

(*Quailing.*) What is that one ?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

The power to suffer. You are in hell. (*A pause.*)

LONNY.

I am not speaking from self, or vanity. I would not hide from her what I am. Let her know that I was the wickedest thing. Let her despise me. But let her not suffer because of me, because I cannot bear it ; do you hear ? I cannot bear it. I had rather be blasted out ; annihilated.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

In hell, the worm is not annihilated ; the fire is not blasted out.

LONNY.

But the agony is, that you will not understand.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Understanding is forgiveness. You are not forgiven.

LONNY.

No, but I want to save her ; she is being punished for my sin, and it is hell, hell, hell !

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

This is hell.

LONNY.

Then curses on this life which can make such evil ! May all this progress from the germ to man wither on its mud ! May the moon blind it, and the sun

blast it and some great blind star come down and crush it, crush it to pulp, to dust, to nothing! And let all the suns go out and the moons fall into them, and the space be empty, empty, with all of you gods and ghosts and fever and folly like the falling of the shadow of nothing. (*He seems to realise his hopelessness, and changes his tone.*) (*Feebly.*) No! No! I am talking folly because I am in such pain. Listen. It was said that there would be pity. If I might live again, suffering what you please, would not that suffice? Would that not save her? Tell me what would save her.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Atonement.

LONNY.

Let me atone, then. If one life of torment be not enough, let me have twenty lives. Let me be an artist or a woman for twenty lives, suffering day and night. Oh, what more could one do?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Atonement. (*He begins to go back into his place.*)

LONNY.

Then let me suffer to the limit to spare her. Kind spirits, for God's sake let me spare her. She's not like me, strong to suffer; she's a little child. I know what I could do. Let my soul suffer in the bodies of animals for ever and for ever and for ever; animals that are in the power of men; animals that men beat, or catch in traps, or love and forsake.

(*No answer.*)

Or let me be a bird kept in a cage. And see the sky through the bars.

(*No answer.*)

Then, for the love and pity of the blessed God

in heaven, tell me, tell me, set me my task of suffering!

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Atonement.

(*Silence.* THE MAN IN ARMOUR *is in his place,* LONNY *is crouched on the floor to R. of table.* MELLONEY *down stage Left.*)

MELLONEY.

Would you have spared me, Lonny, had you known?

LONNY.

Yes.

MELLONEY.

Some other woman would have served?

LONNY.

No.

MELLONEY.

It is a pity that you did not spare me, is it not? And you might so easily have spared me. You had your wife and daughter to turn to. And if you had spared me, none of all this would have happened. You might have seen your child so happy. Now you will see her with a broken heart. Oh, it is a joy to me to see you suffer! I have longed for it for all these years. You will see her suffer, and I shall watch you. Oh, you devil! I am glad of this at last. And you will cry out to her; but she will not hear.

LONNY.

No, she will never hear how I repent.

MELLONEY.

You repent! You are sick that you should suffer, not for the sufferings you have caused.

Here is your daughter, cut even to the heart by you. Now you will know yourself.

LONNY.

Melloney, by the old love between us, have mercy on her.

(MELLONEY *laughs.*)

(LENDA *enters Left Back, carrying a small bag. She goes to the table.*)

LENDA.

Twelve hours ago. Just twelve hours. And now good-bye. I shall not see this place again. (*She unhooks her father's portrait R. and brings it to table.*) Good-bye, father.

Father, do not think I care for what they say. People loved you. And I love and honour you. And I think you know that. I think the dead are here. Father, if you are here in death, speak to me.

(*No answer.*)

There is some spiritual presence here. Is it you, father ?

(*No answer.*)

Spirit, Spirit. I charge you to speak to me.

(*Enter the ghost of* MINNIE BRACKNELL *Right Back.*)

Is there a spirit ?

MINNIE.

Yes. I am Minnie Bracknell, who died in your arms an hour ago.

LENDA.

Is it well with you ?

MINNIE.

Yes.

LENDA.

My father loved you. That was why I came to you.

MINNIE.

I knew that, when you kissed me. But your father did not love me. I loved him. He loved one who deserved more happiness than she had.

LENDA.

Miss Melloney Holtspur ?

MINNIE.

(*Indicating* MELLONEY *who advances.*) She. (*To* MELLONEY.) You were the one her father loved. I was only one who was thankful for crumbs that fell from her master's table. I am happy that I loved him. You are sad. You thought him a mad child. I only loved him, even his madness and his childishness. You could have given him everything, and gave him nothing. I had nothing to give but my good name. Yet you loved him better than I.

If you had ventured to lift one finger, he would have been yours. You did not. So he made his mad marriage and then his mad breaking from it. Bad as I was, I gave him something. But you were his love. Your soul was set for his soul from of old, only the wheels of his life were choked.

Oh, I am happy, happy, happy, to be set free. (*Her face becomes radiant and she passes up the stage Right.*)

LENDA.

Oh, stay, stay ; tell me of my father.

(MINNIE *goes out Right.*)

No, she is gone. She is gone. (*Turns to* MEL-

LONEY.) What are you, there? For there is some one there? Are you she whom my father loved?

(*No answer.*)

(LENDA *leaves table and advances towards* MELLONEY.) No. There is nothing, nothing. Yet there was something.

(*The ghost of* MYRTLE WEST *appears from Left Back.*)

Who are you? Who are you, with the bright face?

MYRTLE.

One who gave all for love.

LENDA.

Myrtle? Myrtle West?

MYRTLE.

I cannot speak; only thank you. Your father brought him to me. Your father was sent from God to change folk. A ship at sea at night comes in dark water. Then instantly the dolphins flash and it is all fire instead of dark. So it was with your father. Beautiful fire. (*She goes out in ecstasy Front Left.*)

(*Enter* KEZIA *Left Back.*)

KEZIA.

Miss Melloney.

LENDA.

I am not your Miss Melloney.

KEZIA.

Oh, Miss Copshrews!

LENDA.

What brings you here at this time?

KEZIA.

Hope to see one I loved.

LENDA.

You find one you hate. In the morning, you will please give this letter to Lady Mento. I am going.

KEZIA.

Miss Copshrews, I am an old woman who will not live to the lime-blossom. I have been called to my death this night. I have been a great sinner to you and yours. I thwarted your father here. I tried to turn Miss Melloney against him. I was bitter to you. I see now that he was not what I thought, but one of the broken panes that God's light shines through. And you are the fine spirit of a girl that (God forgive me!) I tried to humble. Miss Copshrews, I ask you to pardon me. (*She kneels to* LENDA.)

LENDA.

(*Raising her.*) I have been by a death this night. Our hates seem mean beside that. Let us be friends, Miss Spinfield.

KEZIA.

Would I could ask pardon of your father!

LENDA.

Artists do not hate persons, but states of mind. He has forgiven.

LONNY.

I have forgiven. Forgive me.

LENDA.

Father! Father! That is my father.

KEZIA.

I was a bitter sinner to you.

LONNY.

And I to you. That is over, then.

LENDA.

Father! I am your daughter. I am Lenda. Speak to me. Will you not speak to me?

LONNY.

I am condemned.

LENDA.

Father . . . where is your glory?

LONNY.

Where I trod it.

LENDA.

Father! None of me condemns you; only loves and understands. Can my love touch you, or my prayer help you?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

He is condemned.

LENDA.

Till when.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Until atonement.

LENDA.

How can one atone? Oh, speak, speak! He longs to speak, and cannot.

KEZIA.

He longs; he longs for something.

(LONNY *stretches towards the table.*)

You long for the flowers, poor human soul. (*She takes flowers and brings them down Right to him.*)

(LONNY *bursts into tears.*)

LENDA.

My father! my father! I will share your punishment. I will bear it with you. Only speak to me. Make me be near you.

(*There comes the first crowing of the cocks, and* LONNY *dims away, struggling to answer.*)

(*Enter* BUNNY *Right Back.*)

BUNNY.

Lenda! Lenda! my God, Lenda! I've been waiting all night outside the Trenchards' for you. How have I missed you?

LENDA.

By Fate, I suppose. I came back by the lane.

BUNNY.

My God! you've thought that I'd deserted you. I could stand it no longer at last. I knocked. They told me that you had gone. Lenda, darling!

LENDA.

We are not alone here, Bunny. Kezia is here.

KEZIA.

Master Bunny, and you, Miss Lenda, I am going trembling, in a few hours now, to the presence of my Maker. All my days I have been among the Holtspurs. I have held their babes and laid their dead, and their bread has been my portion. If an old woman may be forgiven, Master Bunny, I pray that all beauty and all bounty and all blessing be upon your marriage for ever . . . (*She starts to go off Right*) and for ever . . . and for ever. (*She goes off Right Back.*)

LENDA.

Our marriage is less likely to happen than was thought.

BUNNY.

Lenda, my beloved, I'm half mad from the want of saying this: Don't think that to-night can alter me.

LENDA.

To-night has altered me, Bunny. I'm my father's child. You put him from this house.

BUNNY.

I did not, Lenda ; never. Nothing can change my praise of your father.

LENDA.

Your mother did.

BUNNY.

She is shocked to lose me, and upset by the death-bed. She will love you.

LENDA.

She will not have the chance. When she put my father out, she put me. She thinks my presence here an insult to this house. It will be soon removed.

BUNNY.

Lenda, my sweet, we seem caught in the net of old sorrows. Don't let them break all our hearts. Before all this I felt I'd die if you couldn't love me, but I'll kill myself if you throw me now.

LENDA.

My father begged and stole from your mother's sister.

BUNNY.

I don't care.

LENDA.

I do. I will send a cheque for that when I have arranged. And I will trace those jewels.

BUNNY.

What do those things matter ? Our lives together is our task.

LENDA.

Our lives together, in this house, with my father's sin rising up between us ?

BUNNY.

This house is an evil old coffin, full of dead.

LENDA.

It was he who brought the dead.

I think justice is done now. He spurned your aunt. Your mother has spurned me. So I will go. Good-bye. God bless you, Bunny. (*She turns to go out Right, but stays at table.*) This letter that I wrote to your mother, I'll tear it. It was all bitter. Tell her that I will write. Tell her, whatever my father did, I've paid, Bunny. Oh, Bunny, Bunny, I love you, my Bunny ! I wish I might die. There ! It is at an end now. (*She rises.*)

MELLONEY.

(*Going to the Left of the table.*) Ah, no, no ! You must not part from each other. Let the old sin be ; it has been punished enough. I have been punishing your father in my heart for all these years, yet wanted more vengeance still. You love each other. That atones for all the old sin and wipes it away. Oh, be happy, you two young things, while it is hawthorn with you. Bunny, my beloved, give me your hand. And you ; I loved your father once ; no, I love him still. I give you your lover's hand. Take it from me. I will love you, too, my child, that should have been my child. I will pray for all lovely things for both of you.

(*She places the lovers' hands in each other and slowly goes off Front Left. The lovers look at each other. The hiding*

place at back gives a click and slowly joggles wide open.)

(*Enter from Right Back,* LADY MENTO.)

LADY M.

My dears, you here? What does this mean? Yet the strange thing is, I knew that I should find you. I've had a marvellous dream about my sister Melloney. It was as though she was at my side. She has made me see the right in this matter of your marriage. Lenda, my dear child, I want you to take my son. See, I give him up to you. Will you come into my heart, my daughter? There is room for you, my dear. (*She takes* LENDA.)

LENDA.

Thank you. Thank you.

BUNNY.

Thank you, mother.

(THE CHILDREN *come in, led by* SUSAN.)

LADY M.

(*Turning to* CHILDREN.) But you, my dears, what brings you out of your beds at daybreak?

SUSAN.

We've had dreams, too. Look, Peter! Look!

PETER.

The hiding-place, wide open. What's in it? The treasure!

SUSAN.

What is it?

PETER.

Drawings—paintings. Bring them to the table. Here's a portrait of Kezia. "My last drawing. L.C."

SUSAN.

Give it to Kezia. She longs to have a portrait.

PETER.

Lenda, these are your father's missing paintings.

BUNNY.

They are.

LENDA.

They are, indeed.

SUSAN.

There's something else in the hiding-place. It is boxes!

LADY M.

These are Sir Jotham's jewels. With a note from your father. "I pawned these and then redeemed them. Laurence Copshrews. May the House of Holtspur forgive me!"

BUNNY.

The House of Holtspur does forgive him.

LADY M.

We will carry these things to my room, where there is a fire.

(*They move off Back Right led by* SUSAN, *singing.*)

SUSAN.

The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
And it is well-nigh day,
And Harry the King
Has gone a-hunting,
To bring a deer to bay.

The east is bright, with morning light, etc., etc.

(*After they are gone,* LONNY *comes down Centre Front and crouches and sobs.*)

LONNY.

I flung away life and power, when I did not know what they were. Now I have neither, for ever, and for ever, and for ever.

(*Enter* MELLONEY, *Front Left; she comes down Centre, left of table.*)

MELLONEY.

Lonny Lonny Copshrews!

LONNY.

I do not know where to hide.

MELLONEY.

(*Holding out her arms.*) Hide here, Lonny.

LONNY.

I am unworthy to touch the hem of your garment.

MELLONEY.

And yet you love me.

LONNY.

No one can love twice. I've always loved you.

MELLONEY.

And then a darkness fell upon you, Lonny.

LONNY.

No darkness; a sin, my sin.

MELLONEY.

We were made for each other, from of old, we two, and have been through a dark time apart. But the night is over now, Lonny. Won't you come into the light with me?

LONNY.

My sin was against the spirit that makes the light.

MELLONEY.

It is forgiven, by that spirit.

LONNY.

Then I think all suffering must be at an end throughout the world.

MELLONEY.

For ever, and for ever, and for ever.

(*They draw together and become transfigured as they kiss.*)

THE MAN IN ARMOUR.

Another death is dead !

CURTAIN.

NOTE.

The persons and events described in this play are imaginary. No reference is made to any living person.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

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